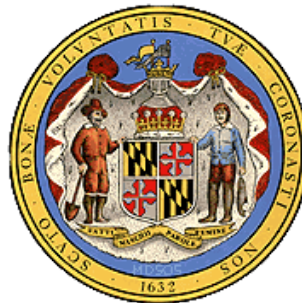


# CY2021 Annual Report of the Governor's Emergency Management Advisory Council

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*A Report to the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly*

In compliance with Maryland Code Annotated, Public Safety Article, §§ 14-105 (e) amended by HB 990, Ch. 287, 2021 and SB 658, Ch. 288, 2021



Submitted by the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM)

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## I. Executive Summary

In accordance with the Annotated Code of Maryland, Public Safety Article, § 14-105 (a) and (d), the Governor's Emergency Management Advisory Council (GEMAC) is authorized to advise the Governor on all matters that relate to emergency management in Maryland. During the 2021 calendar year (CY21), the GEMAC, with a new Chair and a predominately new membership, built upon legacy work executed by the previous GEMAC memberships from 2017-2019.

Capitalizing upon institutional knowledge and member cohesiveness forged during 2019 and 2020, the GEMAC began the year with a strong start, utilizing its Legislative Affairs (LA) Subcommittee to diligently track and analyze proposed legislation up to *sine die* of the General Assembly 2021 Session. The result of GEMAC analysis and discussions was the production of memorandums to the Governor's Office of Legislative Affairs offering recommendations to support certain bills that were perceived by the GEMAC to be beneficial to the emergency management discipline and the citizens of Maryland.<sup>1</sup>

The GEMAC also continued to investigate the efficacy of, and maintained advocacy for, the creation of a disaster assistance fund, managed by the State, to act as a financial "stop-gap" for Maryland local and State entities when disasters do not meet federal thresholds.

Building upon the GEMAC's analysis of and advocacy for emergency management legislation, the GEMAC continued to explore emerging threats and complex interdependencies of capabilities including: 911, cybersecurity, and continuity of operations. The GEMAC will continue to explore these topics with the intent of providing recommendations for legislative action or other actions that may be taken by the Governor to improve capability and reduce risk/threat exposure.

To end the year, the GEMAC ensured it remained abreast of its other statutorily mandated duties (i.e., management of the State Emergency Response Commission [SERC]); GEMAC members elected to receive a refresher of SERC's mission and scope

Supported by the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM), the GEMAC continues to provide value to the Maryland State Executive Branch, and the citizens of Maryland, by offering an independent, non-partisan, and holistic perspective for a wide array of emergency management topics. As always, the GEMAC strives to remain agile and relevant in the emergency management discipline and continues to actively serve the Governor, his office, and his designated homeland security/emergency management representatives in an advisory capacity.

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<sup>1</sup> To note, the emergency management legislation passed by the General Assembly during the 2021 Session has been perceived by the GEMAC as some of the most influential in Maryland history.

## **II. Purpose, Mission, and Scope of Work**

The GEMAC is authorized by statute and is charged with advising the Governor on all matters that relate to emergency management in Maryland.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Executive Order 01.01.1987.11 designates the GEMAC as Maryland's State Emergency Response Commission<sup>3</sup> (SERC) in accordance with Title III of the Federal Superfund Amendments.

A primary focus of the State's overarching emergency management strategy is a whole-community approach, working not only with government stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels, but also with non-governmental organizations, private sector partners, communities, and individuals throughout the emergency management system. In keeping with this whole-community approach, the GEMAC brings together subject matter experts from a wide range of disciplines, backgrounds, and geographic areas to discuss and develop specific recommendations for further study or investigation. As an independent advisory body, GEMAC members are given the opportunity to provide input and comment on the State's activities in moving Maryland forward and developing a comprehensive emergency management program.

## **III. Representation**

By law, the GEMAC must include: fair and reasonable representation for local government; representation for organizations that represent volunteer firefighters and rescue squads; and representation from manufacturing, utilities, and communications industries. There is no size limit or minimum membership requirement for the GEMAC; individuals appointed to the GEMAC serve two year terms.

The Chairman of the GEMAC is Ronald Gill, Director of Emergency Management and Deputy Director of Homeland Security, Prince George's County. The current GEMAC is composed of 23 members, including the Chairman. Current GEMAC members began their terms in January 2020 with a two-year term commitment. See the membership roster in the table on page 5.

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<sup>2</sup> Maryland Code Annotated, Public Safety Article, §§ 14-105 (a) and (d)

<sup>3</sup> Code of Maryland Regulations 01.01.1987.11

## Membership Roster

Name	Position Title	Designation
Adrian Grieve	Division Disaster State Relations Director (PA, MD, DE, DC & FEMA RIII), American Red Cross	Member
Anna Sierra	Director, Caroline County Department of Emergency Services	Resigned
Bruce Wahl	Former Mayor of Chesapeake Beach	Member
Clay Stamp	County Manager, Talbot County	Member
David Willenborg	Sr. Engineer, Technical Support, Department of Defense, NAVAIR	Member
Douglas Brown	Deputy Director, Carroll County Department of Public Works	Member
Dwayne Freeman	Director of High Homeland Security, Washington County Public Schools	Member
Earl "Buddy" Hance	Commissioner, Calvert County	Member
Jasper Jones	Budget Analyst, U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA)	Member
Jennifer Martin	Deputy Commissioner, Population Health and Disease Prevention, Baltimore City Health Department	Member
Jonathan Bratt	Executive Director, UMB Office of Emergency Management	Member
Jonathan Dayton	Maryland State Firemen's Association	Member
Jonathan Favorite	Director of Technical Services, Communications Electronics, Inc.	Member
Joseph LaFleur	Manager, Crisis Management/Business Continuity/IT Disaster Recovery, GP Strategies Corporation	Member
Kevin Simmons	Director, Office of Emergency Management, City of Annapolis	Member
Mike Berna	Fire Chief, Maryland Fire Chief's Association	Member
Robert Poole	Retired Special Agent, ATF; ODNI, Insider Threat SME	Member
Ronald "Ronnie" Gill Jr.	Director, Office of Homeland Security and Office of Emergency Management, Prince George's County	Chairperson
Ryan Miller	Principal, Critical Functions, LLC	Member
Stephen Wantz	Commissioner, Carroll County	Member
Thomas Moran	Executive Director, All Hazards Consortium	Member
Tiffany Green	Fire Chief, Prince George's County Fire and EMS Department	Member
Timothy Cameron	Sheriff, St. Mary's County	Member
Marverly Nettles	Exercise Planner, Government Consulting Firm	Member
MG Timothy Gowen	The Adjutant General	Ex-officio
Walter Landon	Deputy Chief of Staff; Director, Maryland Governor's Office of Homeland Security	Ex-officio
Russell Strickland	Acting Secretary, MDEM	Ex-officio
Terry Thompson	Executive Liaison, MDEM	Ex-officio
Chas Eby	Deputy Executive Director, MDEM	Ex-officio
Anna Sierra	Chief Development Officer, MDEM	Ex-officio
BG Adam Flasch	Director, Joint Staff, Maryland National Guard	Ex-officio
Alexandria Hopkins	Executive Assistant to the Secretary, MDEM	Staff Support
Blake Langford	Maryland State National Capital Region Program Manager, MDEM	Staff Support

## IV. Activities and Topics During 2021

### *February 22, 2021 Quarterly Meeting*

The purpose of this meeting centered upon validating the work of the newly formed Legislative Affairs (LA) Subcommittee during the timespan of Dec 2020 – February 2021. During that time, the LA Subcommittee reviewed various bills of interest and assessed their impact on the emergency management discipline. During the meeting, the LA Subcommittee Chair, Jonathan Bratt, presented the GEMAC with the Subcommittee's recommendations framed within a "support, do not support, remain neutral, no comment" paradigm. Upon conclusion, the GEMAC endorsed the Subcommittee's recommendations and decided to voice support for two bills (SB658 & HB831). The GEMAC decided to provide no comment on any other bill. The GEMAC decided to draft and submit supporting memorandums for these bills to the Governor's Office. *(Note: This memorandum was subsequently submitted on 26 February 2021.)*

### *May 11, 2021 Quarterly Meeting*

During this meeting, the GEMAC conducted a 2021 Maryland Legislative Session Hotwash. Jonathan Bratt, LA Subcommittee Chair, highlighted the results of the committee's work over the past six months, as follows:

- Conducted four intensive sessions to review bills germane to the emergency management discipline
- Provided specific feedback to the GEMAC on nine bills
- Drafted memorandums to the Governor's Office for support of bills
- Provided recommendations for future bills
- Provided continual updates of bill status and final disposition

Ben Yelin, JD, Program Director of Public Policy & External Affairs at the Center for Health and Homeland Security (CHHS) led the GEMAC through the remainder of the hotwash. Mr. Yelin highlighted relevant bills that passed, bills that failed, and potential ideas and priorities for 2022. GEMAC members had the opportunity to ask follow up questions that resulted in the following takeaways.

- Emergency management has always been an important component of government. COVID-19 demonstrated this at all levels of government.
- Maryland State legislators have been very supportive in pushing emergency management forward.
- A flexible State disaster fund is a useful mechanism for supporting jurisdictional damages that do not meet dollar thresholds for federal support. Continued legislative work is required to create and define funding mechanisms to support local jurisdictions and State entities during these non-federally-supported disasters.
  - *Note: A memo was submitted in February 2021 by the GEMAC demonstrating the need for and potential solutions for establishing a disaster assistance fund managed by the State to be a financial "stop-gap" for Maryland local and State entities when disasters do not meet federal thresholds.*

### *August 23, 2021 Quarterly Meeting*

During this meeting the GEMAC explored the Maryland 911 Board and the Statewide 911 capability, in general. This topic was particularly relevant, and catalyzed by, the passage of legislation requiring the Maryland 911 Board to be relocated from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) on October 1, 2021. Furthermore, this same legislation also elevated MEMA to a principal department within the Executive Branch of state government and, as such, renamed it to the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM). Scott Roper, Executive Director of the Maryland 911 Board, and Jack Markey, Director of Frederick County Division of Emergency Management; vice-chair of the Maryland 911 Board; and president of the Maryland Association of Counties' Emergency Managers Affiliate, were invited to speak on the topic.

The discussion was highlighted as follows:

- Overview of Maryland 911 Board Structure
- Overview of Maryland 911 Board Functions
- 911 Capability in Maryland (i.e., PSAP discussion, NextGen 911 discussion)
- Kari's Law
- Nexus between cybersecurity and 911 and required planning
- Q&A Session

Takeaways from the Q&A session may be characterized as follows:

- Local 911 centers have the capability to move operations seamlessly to alternate locations if required
- The 911 Board does not provide equipment for dispatch (e.g., computer dispatch or radios)
- Most local 911 Directors report to the county's emergency manager appointed under the Md. Code Ann., Public Safety Article, § 14-109(b)(1)
  - In one jurisdiction, the 911 Director reports to the fire department
  - In a few jurisdictions, 911 Directors report to the police department or sheriff's office
  - 911 Board core operations and functions will remain unaffected as the move occurs from DPSCS to MDEM

### *November 24, 2021 Quarterly Meeting*

The GEMAC ended the year on a strong note discussing legislation, policy, and impacts on important topics. Ronnie Gill (Chairperson) and Jonathan Bratt (Legislative Affairs Subcommittee Chairperson) led much of the discussion which centered on the following topics and associated points:

- The GEMAC and MDEMA formed a partnership with the goal of collecting and generating legislative priorities for emergency management by interviewing "thought leaders" in the field.
- The high-level legislative priorities can be characterized as: Financial Reform, Professional Advancement, and Information Management.
- Within Financial Reform, the topic of the creation of a disaster relief fund and resiliency fund were revisited.

- Creation of economic triggers and the analysis required (e.g., SoVI or ALICE) to determine these triggers were discussed.
- Given the federal financial and legislative climate, GEMAC members expressed now may be a good time to put this idea forward to legislators.
- Emergency managers in Annapolis, Howard County, and Frederick County discussed the relevance of these funds and provided specific examples of how a fund like this could benefit Maryland’s citizens.
- Within Professional Advancement, the topics discussed were: the designation of emergency managers as public safety professionals, licensure/certification for emergency managers, and the creation of the Chief Resiliency Officer.
  - One GEMAC member highlighted the well-researched benefit of having public safety professionals live within the community they serve. Tax benefits and pension benefits to emergency managers could help stem the ongoing and increasing retention and staffing issue within the field.
- Within the Information Management, the following topics were discussed: cybersecurity, after action reports, law enforcement information sharing with emergency managers, and supply chain information management.

The GEMAC framed this granular legislative analysis and actionable recommendations within the broader “What Keeps You Up at Night” analysis conducted in late 2019. This analysis consisted of questions to various professionals at various levels of government, NGOs, and private sector to inquire their thoughts on greatest threats to the emergency management discipline, Maryland, and the United States. Interestingly, the analyses broadly aligned especially on the issue of staffing and retention, training, funding, and cybersecurity.

Subsequent to this in-depth discussion, the following action items were developed:

- Establish a collaboration between GEMAC, MaCO, CHHS, MDEM, and MDEMA to:
  - Develop a one-pager, to be delivered to the Governor’s Office, proposing the high-level framework of a disaster assistance fund.
  - Engage in conversation with the Governor’s Office to gauge the interest in pursuing this course of action.
- Monitor legislation of interest for the upcoming 2022 General Assembly Legislative Session and provide recommendations to the GEMAC, as appropriate
- Continue to explore other courses of action on the topics discussed at near-future meetings

## **V. Learning from the Past, Planning for the Future**

### *Overview*

The impacts of COVID-19 placed extreme strain on the members of the GEMAC as most were involved in day-to-day response and recovery either in a local, State, NGO, or private capacity. COVID-19 and the transition of MEMA to a principle department within the Executive Branch of Maryland State government also placed a high-



degree of strain on the administrative support to the GEMAC. However, despite these challenges, the GEMAC was still able to succeed in meeting all of its goals and requirements.

The GEMAC intends to continue to mature its LA Subcommittee and refine timing and content of recommendations to the Governor's Office. The GEMAC will continue to expand and revisit cyber preparedness and security as well as alternative State-managed disaster assistance funding mechanisms. Additionally, the GEMAC will explore topics such as Continuity of Operations (COOP) and its nexus to 911, cybersecurity/cyber preparedness/cyber resilience, and all other hazards. Finally, the GEMAC was able to meet its goal in submitting at least two (2) separate recommendations to the Governor's Office and/or the Secretary of MDEM regarding topics relevant to the current implementation of emergency management within Maryland. The GEMAC will work to sustain this goal for the upcoming year.

### *Upcoming Meetings*

The GEMAC meets on a quarterly basis, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. Anticipated quarterly meeting dates for 2022 are as follows:

- February 2022
- May 2022
- August 2022
- November 2022

## **VI. Conclusion**

The GEMAC hereby submits this report along with its sincere appreciation, on behalf of the individual members of the Council, for the opportunity to serve the residents of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted this 1st day of December 2021:

Ronald Gill, Chairman

Governor's Emergency Management Advisory Council