



# Local Emergency Planning Committee

Gem County LEPC  
August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
**Meeting Minutes**

**MISSION STATEMENT:**  
The Gem County Local Emergency Planning Committee is an organized gathering of community members, response agencies, organizations, and public officials, sanctioned by Congress to work together prior to any emergency, natural or man-made disaster, or hazardous material incident, in an attempt to improve planning, response, and coordination as well as the mutual understanding of capabilities and resources to the situation.

**PURPOSE:**  
The purpose of the Gem County Local Emergency Planning Committee is to enhance capabilities in order to successfully mitigate, respond to, and recover from emergency situations in Gem Co community.

**In Attendance:**

Laurie Boston, Gem Co. EM  
Bill Buttici, Gem Co. Commissioner  
Quincy Chung, Emmett Ranger Dist.  
Tahja Jensen, Gem Co. Prosecutor  
Bev Martin, Gem Co. Sheriff’s Posse/  
Fire Dist. #2  
Kandice Rembelski, Valley Family  
Health Care

Ricky Bowman, Southwest Dist. Health  
Curt Christensen, Emmett Fire Dept.  
Liz Gochmour, LEPC Secretary  
Steve Kunka, Emmett Police Dept.  
Joe Mayer, Member of the Public  
Dale Mock, Sherriff’s Posse  
Denise Sorenson, Emmett City Councilman  
Donnie Wunder, Gem Co. Sherriff

**Meeting called to order by Curt Christensen at 8:31a.m.**

**Approval of July 20th Minutes:**

- Motion to approve July 20<sup>th</sup> minutes by Bev Martin. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Bill Buttici.

**Wildfire Update – Quincy Chung: Boise National Forest, Emmett Ranger District:**

- Calling in from Northern Montana
- There are currently 14 Type 1 and 19 Type 2 Incident Management Teams committed and they are still sitting at Planning Level 5, which is the highest level.
- There has been some new activity across the West due primarily to lightning activity and storms from June and early July. These are long duration fires. They were fires that could have been suppressed and turned over to the local units but now have 2-3 Incident Management Teams on them due to resource availability.
- Due to COVID, resources are at a premium. They used to be able to send out “throw together crews” or “regular crews” that are made up of able bodies with fire backgrounds, but fire is not their primary job. A lot of forests are not allowing regular crews due to potential COVID exposure. 90% of crews are contractors, people as well as equipment.
- There is no forecast of a season ending event upcoming, which is usually snow, that will put the fires out. Two weeks ago, Boise had a lightning bust event that caused over a dozen of new starts. The largest was an acre in size, with most a tenth to a quarter of an acre. Extreme drought and fuel moistures are causing things to be extremely dry.
- Fire behavior has been interesting. There was a fire in Lowman about a week and half ago that ran to about 50 acres and then just stopped. There have been similar behaviors on fires in Payette and Boise. They make one good push and then just stop.

- There is still a lot of fire season left. Historically, they do not see season ending event until the first part of October. The long-term forecast does not show any more lightning and precipitation, just cooler temperatures, not in the 100's.
- They still have adequate resources across the forest in trying to support the greater good nationally as much as they can.
- The smoke is coming from fires across state lines. In the Northwest (Oregon and Washington) area they have 39 uncontained large wild fires. In Northern California, they have 10 fires that are uncontained. The Dixie fire being the largest at 578,000 acres.
- They have had to change tactics to adjust for resources. It is not just with fire personnel, but personnel in all areas. From catering units, food truck drivers, getting port-a-potties, and to getting jet fuel.
- There is also a shortage of EMT's and Paramedics in Montana. Emergency services cannot cross state lines into Montana without being licensed in Montana. They have one ambulance supporting two fires totally about 15,000 acres.

### **Public Comments:**

- **Joe Mayer:** Keep up the good work.

### **General Reports:**

- **Bill Butticci, Gem Co. Commissioner:** They are moving along with development and public hearings. They received the report back from Keller engineering with their recommendations on how to enhance the power system in Dispatch.
- **Laurie Boston, Gem Co. Emergency Manager:** As of Friday, there have been 214 reported cases of COVID with 2 deaths. Gem County was recognized as having the highest daily incident rate per 10,000 are 6-county health district. The Delta variant is present in Gem County. From July 11<sup>th</sup> – Aug 11<sup>th</sup>, there have been 11 reported cases in school-aged children. Approx. 6000 have been vaccinated in the 12+ age group in Gem County. The CDC recommends fully vaccinated wear masks in public in-door settings in areas of substantial or high transmission. The CDC is also recommending immuno-compromised individuals and those that have been vaccinated get a booster after 8 months.
- **Donnie Wunder, Gem Co. Sherriff:** The Sherriff's department is running business as usual.
- **Tahja Jensen, Gem Co. Prosecutor's Office:** Judge Smith has required that anyone attending court wear masks. Certain cases are being held over Zoom. The Supreme Court has mandated to look at the COVID numbers and adjust court services accordingly. They are not having jury trials and are very limited for in-person court at this time.
- **Chief Kunka, Emmett Police Dept:** Staffing for the police department is low. They have moved back to having 1 SRO in the school system, Heather Mason. Chief Kunka and Sgt. Bertalotto will be helping at the schools until they are able to get someone hired and trained. They are hoping to get another person in the schools by the beginning of the new year.
- **Denise Sorenson, Emmett City Council:** Thanks to everyone that helped make Heroes and Ice Cream (National Night Out) a successful event. The community really like the finger printing, the fire trucks, and talking with the Sherriff's Posse members. Thanks also to the City of Emmett for their help at the WWII Veterans "Dream Flight" event at the airport.
- **Chief Christensen, City Fire:** The PR2TA (Payette River Regional Technical Academy) Hanger has been opened up for students last month for students to learn how to do maintenance on and to fly aircraft. City Fire has hired 2 new fire fighters in the last 6 weeks to anticipate needs. The City Fire Department received a grant for trench rescue equipment. Chief Christensen will be attending a training in Utah and then will do some in-services and yearly training locally.

- **Bev Matin, Fire Dist. #2/Ola Community:** Fire 2 is standing by and keeping their fingers crossed. Bev participated in the Northwest Regional Cowboy Shoot and placed 4<sup>th</sup> in her division as well as a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place in side matches.
- **Dale Mock, Gem Co. Sherriff's Posse:** Sherriff's Posse had 5 members attend the Idaho State Search and Rescue training.
- **Kandice Rembelski, Valley Family Health Care:** Valley Family has had an increase in COVID testing. There has been more vaccinated test positive. They are seeing an uptick in the Delta variant. They have also been short staffed with staff being out and the inability to hire new MA's. They will be bringing in a new provider in a couple months for a total of 7 providers. They are currently only testing symptomatic patients for which there is no charge.
- **Ricky Bowman, Southwest District Health:** The Health District is seeing an uptick of new COVID cases and testing. If a strike team is needed to provide vaccinations for agencies, please contact Laurie to arrange with SWDH. They are still working on epidemiology surveillance in order to provide education to school districts and healthcare partners. The FDA has approved a vaccine booster for immuno-compromised individuals. The CDC is still determining specific qualifications.

Motion to adjourn at 9:20 am. by Chief Kunka. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Bill Butticci.

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at 8:30 am. Direction will be provided at a later date on whether the meeting will be in person or remote.