

MARTHA'S VINEYARD

Island-Wide Emergency Management and Response
Coordination

**Comprehensive Emergency
Management Plan (CEMP) Outline
Executive Summary**

May 2026



Prepared for Dukes County and the Martha's Vineyard Communities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Martha's Vineyard Island-Wide Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) establishes a coordinated, scalable, and operational framework for emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery, and continuity activities across Martha's Vineyard and Dukes County, Massachusetts. The plan was developed to provide a unified emergency management coordination structure capable of supporting complex incidents. **The CEMP preserves the legal authority and operational independence of each participating Martha's Vineyard jurisdiction.**

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The CEMP establishes the operational doctrine, governance framework, coordination procedures, activation protocols, organizational structures, and support mechanisms for the Martha's Vineyard Multi-Agency Coordination System (MAC-S). The plan supports all-hazards emergency management activities involving the municipalities of Aquinnah, Chilmark, Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, Tisbury, West Tisbury, Dukes County, and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah). The CEMP is designed to complement—not replace—individual municipal Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs), local Incident Command structures, or municipal authority. Each jurisdiction retains full command authority, fiscal responsibility, and operational control over its personnel, facilities, and emergency operations.

OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND ISLAND INTERDEPENDENCE

Martha's Vineyard operates within a uniquely complex emergency management environment shaped by geographic isolation, transportation dependency, seasonal population fluctuations, and limited infrastructure redundancy. The Island depends heavily upon ferry transportation and Martha's Vineyard Airport for supply chains, emergency transportation, mutual aid access, medical evacuations, and continuity of commerce. Shared infrastructure systems—including healthcare services, utilities, fuel distribution, communications networks, transportation corridors, and public health systems—serve all Island jurisdictions collectively. Failures or disruptions affecting these systems have the potential to create cascading operational impacts across multiple communities simultaneously.

HAZARD AND THREAT ENVIRONMENT

The CEMP is informed by a comprehensive Hazard and Vulnerability Assessment (HVA) identifying the Island's primary natural, technological, and human-caused threats. Major hazards include coastal flooding, storm surge, hurricanes, tropical storms, nor'easters, utility disruptions, ferry and transportation interruptions, severe winter weather, drought, wildfire, public health emergencies, hazardous materials incidents, cyber and communications disruptions, and infrastructure failures.

The plan recognizes that climate change, sea-level rise, and increasingly severe weather events are amplifying operational risk across Martha's Vineyard. Seasonal population increases further intensify emergency management complexity by significantly increasing demand on transportation systems, healthcare capacity, sheltering operations, public safety resources, and evacuation planning during peak tourism periods.

STRATEGIC COORDINATION FRAMEWORK

The CEMP establishes the Martha's Vineyard Multi-Agency Coordination System (MAC-S) as the operational coordination architecture for island-wide emergency management. The MAC-S is intended to provide coordination support during incidents that exceed the practical coordination capability of at least two towns or require sustained, multi-agency, or island-wide support operations. The MAC-S includes the Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MAC-G), the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC), and associated support functions responsible for public information, documentation, resource management, planning, logistics coordination, liaison operations, and recovery coordination.

MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION CENTER (MACC)

The Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) serves as the operational hub for island-wide coordination activities. The MACC may operate as a physical facility, a hybrid coordination environment, or a fully virtual coordination platform depending upon incident conditions, staffing availability, infrastructure status, and operational needs. The MACC supports situational awareness, information sharing, resource prioritization, interagency coordination, public information synchronization, and coordination with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). The MACC does not function as an Incident Command Post and does not exercise tactical command authority over local responders or municipal operations.

GOVERNANCE AND PRESERVATION OF MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY

The CEMP repeatedly emphasizes that municipal command authority and operational independence are retained at all times. The MAC-S is designed as a coordination system and not a centralized command structure. The plan recommends that the Dukes County Emergency Management Association (DCEMA) serve as the island-wide programmatic governing and policy coordination body, along with the role of the Executive Policy Group (EPG). During activations, the Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MAC-G) and Executive Policy Group provide strategic guidance, resource prioritization, policy coordination, and executive-level decision support while respecting the authority and autonomy of participating jurisdictions.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR

A key enabling element of the CEMP is the Martha's Vineyard Emergency Management Coordinator position. The Coordinator functions as the MACC Director during activations and serves as the primary facilitator for island-wide preparedness, planning, training, exercises, grant coordination, resource inventory development, stakeholder engagement, and operational coordination. **The Coordinator does not replace local emergency managers or exercise operational control over municipal response operations.** Instead, the Coordinator serves as the central integration point for preparedness and emergency coordination activities across the Island.

OPERATIONAL SCALABILITY AND ACTIVATION

The CEMP establishes scalable activation levels to support incidents ranging from routine monitoring activities to full island-wide emergency coordination operations. Activation phases include Monitor/Standby operations, Partial Activation, and Full Activation. Activation decisions are based on incident complexity, operational impacts, resource requirements, infrastructure disruption, and the degree of multi-jurisdictional coordination required. The plan establishes activation triggers involving severe weather, public health emergencies, utility failures, transportation disruptions, mass casualty incidents, and major infrastructure impacts affecting multiple communities.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The CEMP places significant emphasis on maintaining a shared Common Operating Picture (COP) through coordinated situational awareness and information management processes. The MACC Planning and Situation Unit is responsible for collecting, analyzing, validating, and disseminating operational information from on-scene Incident Command/Unified Command, municipal Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), healthcare systems, transportation partners, utilities, and state agencies. The plan identifies standardized Essential Elements of Information (EEl)s necessary to support executive decision-making, resource prioritization, public information coordination, and operational forecasting.

RESOURCE COORDINATION AND MUTUAL AID

The CEMP establishes a tiered resource request and coordination process aligned with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and National Response Framework (NRF). Island resource coordination begins at the municipal level and escalates through mutual aid processes, MACC coordination, and ultimately to MEMA support when local and island-wide capabilities are exhausted. The plan emphasizes the importance of standardized resource tracking, coordinated procurement, shared situational awareness, and centralized mission management to reduce duplication, improve prioritization, and increase operational efficiency during emergencies.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

The CEMP establishes a coordinated Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC) framework to support unified public messaging during emergencies. The Public Information Officer (PIO) coordinates messaging among participating jurisdictions, partner agencies, healthcare organizations, transportation systems, and state agencies to ensure accurate, timely, and consistent information dissemination. The plan emphasizes public warning integration, rumor control, multilingual communication, accessibility requirements, and coordination with Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), social media platforms, and transportation messaging systems.

PLANNING, TRAINING, AND EXERCISES

The CEMP establishes a comprehensive preparedness and capability-building framework focused on planning standardization, training, exercises, and operational familiarization. The plan calls for standardized MACC task books, position-specific job aids, operational checklists, integrated training programs, recurring exercises, and annual preparedness activities aligned with FEMA and MEMA standards. The training and exercise framework is designed to improve role familiarity, operational confidence, interagency coordination, and overall emergency management readiness across Martha's Vineyard.

DOCUMENTATION, FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RECOVERY

The CEMP places strong emphasis on documentation, financial accountability, and recovery coordination. Standardized documentation procedures are intended to support FEMA Public Assistance eligibility, legal defensibility, operational accountability, and long-term recovery management. The plan includes procedures for disaster cost tracking, operational documentation, resource mission tracking, reimbursement coordination, and recovery transition activities. Recovery planning addresses short-term stabilization, intermediate recovery operations, and long-term community restoration, including infrastructure recovery, economic stabilization, sheltering, debris management, and continuity of essential services.

WHOLE COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND DISABILITIES, ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

The CEMP incorporates whole-community emergency management principles and specifically addresses Disabilities and Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) populations, underserved populations, seasonal workers, elderly residents, visitors, individuals lacking transportation access, and economically vulnerable populations. The plan emphasizes accessibility compliance, continuity of care, transportation assistance, shelter accessibility, public information accessibility, and coordination with nonprofit, healthcare, and social service organizations to support vulnerable populations during disasters.

CONCLUSION

The Martha's Vineyard Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan provides a comprehensive operational framework for strengthening preparedness, coordination, resilience, and emergency management capability across the Island. By establishing a scalable Multi-Agency Coordination System, standardizing operational procedures, strengthening situational awareness, improving public information coordination, and enhancing preparedness and recovery capability, **the CEMP positions Martha's Vineyard to better manage complex emergencies while preserving the authority, governance, and operational independence of all participating jurisdictions.**