

MARTHA'S VINEYARD

Island-Wide Emergency
Management and Response Coordination
Strategic Integration & Implementation Plan
Executive Summary

2027–2031



Prepared for Dukes County and the Martha's Vineyard Communities

May 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Martha's Vineyard Island-Wide Emergency Management Strategic Integration and Implementation Plan establishes a comprehensive, multi-year framework for improving emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery, and resilience across Martha's Vineyard and Dukes County, Massachusetts. The Strategic Plan addresses the operational realities of a geographically isolated island community dependent upon shared infrastructure, transportation systems, healthcare resources, and seasonal tourism-driven economic activity. **The plan encompasses Aquinnah, Chilmark, Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, Tisbury, West Tisbury, and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), while preserving the authority and operational independence of each jurisdiction.**

STRATEGIC NEED AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Martha's Vineyard functions as a highly interdependent operational environment where ferry transportation, airport operations, healthcare services, utilities, communications systems, fuel distribution, and emergency services support all Island communities collectively. Disruptions to any one of these systems can create cascading consequences affecting public safety, continuity of government, healthcare delivery, transportation, economic stability, and community resilience across the Island. The Strategic Plan recognizes that although the Island has strong local leadership and mutual aid traditions, it lacks a formalized island-wide coordination architecture capable of managing complex, sustained, or multi-jurisdictional emergencies.

HAZARD AND THREAT ENVIRONMENT

The Strategic Plan is informed by a comprehensive Hazard and Vulnerability Assessment (HVA) that identified coastal storms, hurricanes, flooding, winter weather, transportation disruptions, utility failures, wildfires, public health emergencies, cyber incidents, and hazardous materials events as significant threats to Martha's Vineyard. Seasonal population surges substantially increase emergency management complexity, amplifying demand on healthcare, sheltering, transportation, and emergency response systems during peak tourism periods. The HVA findings confirm that the Island's primary challenge is not hazard identification, but operational coordination depth, interoperability, sustained readiness, and scalable emergency management capability.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Plan establishes a phased five-year implementation roadmap spanning from year 2027 through year 2031. The roadmap focuses on seven strategic goals:

1. Establishing coordinated governance,
2. Strengthening emergency operations planning,
3. Operationalizing the Multi-Agency Coordination System (MAC-S),
4. Improving response and recovery capability,
5. Implementing training and exercises,
6. Modernizing communications and technology systems, and
7. Developing sustainable funding and governance structures.

The phased implementation approach ensures that governance, staffing, doctrine, and planning foundations are established before expanding into advanced operational coordination capabilities.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The plan recommends that the Dukes County Emergency Management Association (DCEMA) serve as the programmatic governing and oversight body for the island-wide emergency management program. DCEMA would provide policy guidance, implementation oversight, strategic coordination, and support for the Multi-Agency Coordination System and serve as the Executive Policy Group (EPG).

A critical element of the plan is the establishment of a full-time Martha's Vineyard Emergency Management Coordinator position responsible for implementation oversight, grant coordination, preparedness initiatives, training and exercise management, resource inventory development, planning support, stakeholder coordination, and MAC-S facilitation. **The Coordinator serves as a program manager and facilitator, not as an Incident Commander or centralized operational authority.**

MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION SYSTEM (MAC-S)

The Strategic Plan establishes the Martha's Vineyard Multi-Agency Coordination System (MAC-S) as the operational coordination architecture for island-wide emergency management. The MAC-S includes the Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MAC-G), the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC), and supporting coordination functions such as public information, documentation, finance, resource management, and liaison operations. The MACC may operate in physical, hybrid, or virtual configurations and is designed to support situational awareness, resource coordination, information sharing, and policy-level decision support during emergencies that exceed local capabilities. **The MAC-S does not replace local command authority or direct tactical operations.**

PLANNING, TRAINING, AND EXERCISES

The Strategic Plan identifies planning, training, and exercises as capability gaps requiring immediate improvement. Many municipal emergency management plans are outdated, inconsistently structured, insufficiently exercised, or not aligned with neighboring jurisdictions. To address these issues, the plan calls for standardized Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) templates, continuity planning development, recurring preparedness workshops, FEMA and MEMA-aligned training programs, annual tabletop exercises, operations-based exercises, and full-scale island-wide exercises. The plan emphasizes that repeated training, exercising, and operational familiarization are essential to building confidence, improving coordination, and strengthening readiness across all Island jurisdictions.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, DOCUMENTATION, AND RECOVERY

The Strategic Plan places strong emphasis on improving resource management, disaster documentation, fiscal tracking, and recovery coordination. The current lack of standardized island-wide resource inventories, situation reporting systems, and FEMA-compliant documentation procedures limits operational effectiveness and reimbursement eligibility. The plan proposes development of a comprehensive island-wide resource inventory, standardized situation reporting systems, coordinated resource request procedures, FEMA Public Assistance documentation programs, and a Martha's Vineyard Recovery Framework aligned with the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF). These initiatives are intended to improve operational accountability, strengthen recovery coordination, and maximize disaster reimbursement opportunities.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Strategic Plan recognizes coordinated public information and interoperable communications as essential emergency management functions. The plan proposes development of a unified public information and warning strategy that supports coordinated messaging, Joint Information System (JIS) operations, rumor control, multilingual communication, and public alert and warning integration. The strategy also includes modernization of communications systems and implementation of shared situational awareness platforms capable of supporting island-wide coordination and Common Operating Picture (COP) development during emergencies.

SUSTAINABILITY AND LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

The Strategic Plan emphasizes that emergency management capability must be sustainable over the long term. To support sustainability, the plan calls for diversified funding strategies, grant coordination, jurisdictional cost-sharing models, annual performance reporting, corrective action tracking, and recurring strategic reviews. The plan establishes performance metrics tied to each strategic goal and includes annual, mid-cycle, and end-of-cycle evaluations to ensure accountability, continuous improvement, and long-term program effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The Martha's Vineyard Island-Wide Emergency Management Strategic Integration and Implementation Plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for building a resilient, coordinated, and sustainable island-wide emergency management program. The plan strengthens preparedness, improves operational integration, enhances public safety coordination, modernizes emergency management systems, and supports effective recovery across all Martha's Vineyard communities. Through phased implementation, shared governance, standardized planning, operational coordination, and sustained preparedness investment, the Strategic Plan positions Martha's Vineyard to better manage future emergencies while preserving the authority, identity, and operational independence of each participating jurisdiction.