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**MEMORANDUM**

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*June 1, 2020*

*To:* Governors' Offices  
*From:* National Governors Association  
*Re:* Planning for Concurrent Emergencies

**Background**

Given the protracted nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, states will likely experience additional, simultaneous emergencies concurrent with additional outbreaks of the virus. Experts are forecasting an above-average season for hurricane activity across the Atlantic as well as an above normal wildfire risk for the states in the Pacific Northwest.<sup>1</sup> Extreme heat may present a nationwide threat and most states are likely to experience above average temperatures for many months of this year.<sup>2</sup> Earthquakes, targeted violence, and cybersecurity incidents know no season and pose persistent risk. Responding to and recovering from these disasters independently presents a significant challenge to states, notwithstanding the already staggering effects of COVID-19 on human, financial, and physical resources. Governors will need to work across the emergency management enterprise to properly prepare for a confluence of events that will strain their already burdened systems to ensure that their states are ready to protect lives and property.

This memorandum provides:

- Actions for Governors Looking to Bolster Emergency Preparedness
- An Overview of the Planning Considerations for Simultaneous Emergencies
  - [Emergency Powers and Authorities](#)
  - [Capacity of Response Systems](#)
  - [Complications for Evacuation and Sheltering](#)
  - [Resources and Supply Chain](#)
  - [Public Information and Warning](#)

In addition to the following recommendations, standard best practices for emergency management, including using a “whole community” approach, updating and socializing emergency operations and continuity of operations (COOP) plans, and enabling individual preparedness will provide a useful foundation for enhancing state readiness for disasters.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jones, Judson. (May 8, 2020). *Experts Agree This Hurricane Season Will be Above-Average, Maybe Even Extremely Active*. CNN. Retrieved from: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/08/weather/hurricane-season-2020-forecast-above-average/index.html>. ; National Interagency Fire Center. (May 1, 2020). *Outlook Period – May, June, July and August 2020: Executive Summary*. Retrieved from: [https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly\\_seasonal\\_outlook.pdf](https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The National Weather Service. (May 21, 2020). *Experimental Unofficial Long-Lead Forecasts: Two-Class Probabilities*. Retrieved from: [https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long\\_range/two\\_class.php](https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/two_class.php).

<sup>3</sup> National Governors Association. (February 2019). *A Governor's Guide to Homeland Security*. Retrieved from: [https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/NGA\\_HomelandSecurityGuide\\_2.19\\_update.pdf](https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/NGA_HomelandSecurityGuide_2.19_update.pdf)

## **Recommendations for Governors Looking to Bolster Emergency Preparedness**

- **Prioritize planning.** Given the panoply of threats, governors are likely to be challenged by additional incidents during the COVID-19 crisis. Governors and their key staff can review potential scenarios, conduct tabletop exercises, and discuss key decisions to clarify their approach to leading through concurrent emergencies. Governors may also consider revisiting their COOP plans to refine which state services should be prioritized and supported in the event of severely depleted resources.<sup>4</sup>
- **Raise awareness of the potential for concurrent emergencies, both within state government and with the public.** While individuals have focused on protecting themselves and their families from COVID-19, they may have neglected to properly prepare for other emergencies. State agencies may be similarly positioned, with much of their budgets already spent on pandemic response activities. Governors can draw attention to the additional risk of natural and man-made threats, develop a culture of all-hazards preparedness, and promote trusted sources of information that clarify protective guidance.
- **Prepare a funding strategy for preparedness, response, and recovery activities.** COVID-19 has placed incredible strain on state financial resources while demands for preparedness activities (planning, stockpiling, training, etc.) have increased. Future response and recovery operations will also require enormous financial investments. Governors may consult with advisors from homeland security, emergency management, and public health to determine top priorities for state spending. To ease the state costs, states can leverage federal grant programs:
  - For preparedness, states may consider utilizing the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) program through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), and the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as well as federal stimulus bills.<sup>5</sup> Some of these programs require a state-sponsored match, either in hard cash or third-party in kind donation; however, the discount on funds is sizeable, often between 50 to 75 percent.
  - For response and recovery, depending on the size, scope, and federally-declared disaster status of the incident, states may be able utilize up to 90 different grant programs across nearly two dozen federal agencies.<sup>6</sup> The exact suite of available programs is determined on a case-by-case basis, but governors can advocate for activation of these programs based on the needs of the emergency. Cost-share may

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<sup>4</sup> National Governors Association. (April 10, 2020). *Gubernatorial Considerations for Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) Implementation*. [Memorandum]. Retrieved from: [https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NGA-Memo\\_COOP\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NGA-Memo_COOP_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (May 26, 2020). *State and Local Readiness | PHEP Cooperative Agreement*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readiness/phep.htm>. ; Federal Emergency Management Agency. (April 14, 2020). *Emergency Management Performance Grant Performance*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-management-performance-grant-program#>. ; Federal Emergency Management Agency. (February 14, 2020). *Homeland Security Grant Program*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fema.gov/homeland-security-grant-program>.

<sup>6</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency. (August 25, 2017). *Listing of Disaster Funding Resources*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/134619>.



be required, and governors should evaluate how their strategy for meeting the non-federal match requirement may be affected by the ongoing financial crisis.<sup>7</sup>

Many states also provide a state public assistance program to provide localities with financial resources for smaller incidents which may not rise to the threshold of receiving national declaration or support. Governors can adjust the cost-share requirements of these programs to more effectively support recovery from these types of incidents.

Lastly, the funds provided by the CARES Act and other COVID-19 relief bills are fairly flexible.<sup>8</sup> State agencies may be able to utilize these funds to support ongoing preparedness and response activities for COVID-19, as well as other hazards with a nexus with the virus.

- **Ensure operational agencies adjust their plans for incident response and recovery.** Emergency plans and their hazard-specific annexes should be examined through the lens of the global pandemic. While the National Response Framework provides general guidelines for managing simultaneous incidents, the systemic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic may invalidate key planning assumptions, such as the capabilities of localities, availability of mutual aid, and accessibility of federal support. This may create a need for entire strategies to be revised. Additionally, COVID-19-specific precautions, such as social distancing requirements, may create unique challenges for otherwise well-practiced disaster capabilities including evacuation and sheltering. Emergency management, public health, and other operational agencies can coordinate planning efforts to harmonize guidance across the government enterprise.
- **Account for the unique facets of a potential cybersecurity incident.** At a time where maintaining operations – potentially in a virtual environment – is paramount, governors should ensure that emergency management personnel are equipped to handle a potential cyber disruption. One such example is a ransomware attack that takes and encrypts access to government data or limits access to information technology. Emergency management personnel should review relevant agency incident response plans, as well as statewide cyber disruption response plans.<sup>9</sup> Key lessons learned from prior cyberattacks are to: ensure COOP plans limit the spread of malicious malware should emergency personnel need to report to alternate locations, ensure that the state’s network architecture is not exclusively stored in the cloud, and discuss the feasibility of providing remote incident response with security professionals.
- **Help individuals prepare for all types of hazards.** Considered the backbone of readiness, people who adequately plan and prepare for disasters require less government assistance with transportation, food, and shelter. With COVID-19 producing broad unemployment and unprecedented economic contraction, many individuals and families may struggle to apply their limited financial resources to disaster preparedness activities. In addition to the

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<sup>7</sup> National Governors Association. (May 20, 2020). *Cost Share Considerations for FEMA Public Assistance Grants*. [Memorandum]. Retrieved from: [https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NGA-Memo\\_Cost-Share\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NGA-Memo_Cost-Share_Final.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury. *Policy Issues | The CARES Act Works for All Americans*. Retrieved from: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares>.

<sup>9</sup> National Governors Association. (July 2019). *State Cyber Disruption Response Plans*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nga.org/center/publications/hsp-publications/state-cyber-disruption-response-plans/>;

financial and employment assistance states are already providing individuals, governors can help enable preparedness by providing financial incentives, removing regulatory barriers, and providing direct assistance to residents in their states.<sup>10</sup>

- **Florida, Texas, and Virginia** all offer sales tax holidays for emergency preparedness supplies.<sup>11</sup>
- **New York** provides emergency kits to residents who attend training and **Utah** is ensuring every resident has access to a face mask.<sup>12</sup>
- Governors may want to continue to evaluate the need for WIC and SNAP waivers. Aggressive stockpiling of food, diapers, and other necessities for COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders has reduced the availability of WIC-eligible items in some states and beneficiaries have had limited access to these critical items. This challenge may be compounded when additional stockpiling occurs for hurricanes or other forecasted threats.

## **An Overview of the Planning Considerations for Simultaneous Emergencies**

### **Emergency Powers and Authorities**

By declaring states of emergency and/or making disaster declarations, all governors have emergency powers that enable them to address their respective operating environments.<sup>13</sup> However, the emergence of concurrent disasters will likely require separate invocation of emergency powers to address the specific challenges presented by both natural and man-made incidents. Emergency management agencies, state health officials, homeland security advisors, and governors' legal counsel should coordinate with respect to evaluating new threats and invoking legal mechanisms in response. States should consult their legal counsel and attorney general's office and reference relevant statutes and case law for state-specific procedures and guidance.

### **Capacity of Response Systems**

With many emergency management operations entering their third month of continuous operation, the additional strain of a second emergency may overwhelm an already stretched system. States will need to adjust their response strategies to account for high demand and minimal resources. Specific planning considerations include:

- **Coordination:** As part of their planning and preparedness activities, governors can work with their emergency managers to identify the best way to organize their response systems to both support ongoing COVID-19 operations (testing, surveillance, etc.) as well as the immediate demands of additional incidents. Governors may consider establishing a second

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<sup>10</sup> National Governors Association. (April 21, 2020). *Steps to Address Food and Financial Insecurity for Individuals and Families in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*. [Memorandum]. Retrieved from: <https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Steps-to-Address-Food-and-Financial-Insecurity.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> The Florida Senate, President Office. (March 13, 2020). *Senate Passes Broad-Based Tax Relief Package*. [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Media/PressReleases/Show/3246>; Texas Comptroller. (May 2020). *Taxes | Emergency Preparation Supplies Sales Tax Holiday*. Retrieved from: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/publications/98-1017.php>; Virginia Tax. (2020). *Virginia Sales Tax Holiday*. Retrieved from: <https://www.tax.virginia.gov/virginia-sales-tax-holiday>.

<sup>12</sup> New York State Citizen Preparedness Corps. (2020). *Preparedness Kits*. Retrieved from: <https://prepare.ny.gov/preparedness-kits>; Utah State. (2020). *A Mask for Every Utahn COVID-19 Mask Order Form*. Retrieved from: <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/mask/>.

<sup>13</sup> National Governors Association. (May 2020). *Coronavirus: What You Need to Know Now*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nga.org/coronavirus/>.



emergency operations center to coordinate the response to the second emergency. Governors and their agency representatives should carefully evaluate the trade-offs of operating dual facilities, especially with regards to staffing, leadership, and coordination.

- **Workforce:** The emergency response workforce, including state employees, local first responders, and health care workers, may be unable or unavailable to perform additional duties during a concurrent emergency. Governors may consider policies that support these personnel in staying on the job, including providing appropriate levels of personal protective equipment (PPE), liability protection, and worker’s compensation. Within state government, cross-training employees from other state agencies may also create additional capacity, especially for supportive functions such as finance, administration, and human resources. Governors may also consider augmenting their workforce with National Guard personnel, volunteers and, if necessary, contractors. Technology solutions may also supplement staffing and close process gaps.
  - During tornado outbreaks in the spring, **Tennessee** and **Arkansas** “virtualized” at least some components of their EOC. Minimizing the number of staff at the state EOC facility allowed these states to protect the health of their workforce and safeguarded operations by keeping critical personnel from falling ill.
  - In the wake of the tornados, **Arkansas** enlisted the assistance of the civil air patrol to conduct damage assessments by flyover and capture images to support a national declaration of disaster.<sup>14</sup> State officials worked closely with their local FEMA partners to get special approval to use this alternative method in an effort to protect responders from the additional risk of on-scene operations during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Partner Organizations:** Many states rely on community-based organizations, such as food banks, faith-based organizations, and other non-profits to provide critical disaster services like sheltering and feeding. Many of these organizations have had their physical and financial resources depleted by the demands of COVID-19 and may be unable to provide their usual levels of partnership and service.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, businesses with which states contract disaster services (such as road clearing, debris removal, or transportation) may be unavailable due to the economic downturn. States officials may want to actively confirm the capabilities of partners and the validity of contracts as part of their plan review.
- **Mutual Aid and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC):** Almost every major catastrophe in the United States since 2001 has seen states support each other with resources through EMAC. When one region of the country is struck by a major disaster, generally, surplus resources can be found throughout the country and allocated to the state(s) in need. Given the nationwide impacts of COVID-19, sharing of resources may be limited and workers may be reluctant to travel due to infection concerns.<sup>16</sup> States may

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<sup>14</sup> Holt, Tony. (April 5, 2020). *Jonesboro Expects to Get Federal Aid After Damage Tops \$6M*. Arkansas Democrat Gazette. Retrieved from: <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/apr/05/jonesboro-expects-to-get-federal-aid-af/>.

<sup>15</sup> Kulish, Nicholas. (May 6, 2020). ‘*Never Seen Anything Like It*’: Cars Line Up for Miles at Food Banks. The New York Times. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/business/economy/coronavirus-food-banks.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Rott, Nathan. (April 11, 2020) ‘*Hope Isn’t A Strategy*.’ *How to Prepare For a Natural Disaster During COVID-19*. NPR. Retrieved from: <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/11/829193312/hope-isn-t-a-strategy-how-to-prepare-for-a-natural-disaster-during-covid-19>.

need to identify other strategies to bolster supplies, equipment, and staffing. International mutual aid agreements, such as the Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Arrangement, may allow states to request resources from countries less affected by the pandemic.<sup>17</sup>

### **Complications for Evacuation & Sheltering**

Some of the most high-profile and critical services that states provide during major disasters are evacuation and sheltering. COVID-19 has complicated the ability of states to deliver these services in the traditional ways due to infection concerns for congregate facilities and mass transit.

- **Evacuation:** Governors will need to consider the impacts of COVID-19 on the timing of protective actions like evacuation orders. Mass evacuation will likely occur at a slower rate because mitigation and social distancing protocols may limit use of high-density transit options. Despite uncertainty in forecasts, governors may need to consider issuing evacuation orders earlier than usual to account for these potential delays. Additionally, moving people from one community to another may increase outbreaks of COVID-19. Governors may need to assist receiving communities with shoring up medical and public health resources due to a potential influx of infected evacuees. Lastly, infection risk may decrease evacuation participation rate. States should consider planning for an increased demand on search and rescue resources as many people may choose to remain in their homes due to fear of the virus.
- **Sheltering:** Non-congregate strategies may be an option for smaller incidents; however, the limited availability of hotel rooms and the high cost of renting them inhibits this strategy from being used for major disasters with a large number of survivors.<sup>18</sup> Despite the increased risk of a COVID-19 outbreak, congregate sheltering may be the only realistic option for major storms, wildfires, and floods. Governors can work with their sheltering partners to harmonize guidelines for space and facility requirements, as well as mitigation processes to minimize disease transmission.<sup>19</sup>
- **Health Care and Correctional Facilities:** Given the high volume of confirmed COVID-19 infections in hospitals, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, jails and prisons, states will need to develop specialized strategies to evacuate, shelter, and supervise these populations apart from the general public. Governors and their state emergency managers can reach out to these partners to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clarified, planning gaps are resolved, and that the unique needs of these facilities are met.

### **Resources and Supply Chain**

Over the course of the COVID-19 emergency, states encountered challenges in securing critical resources and supplies. Based on lessons learned, governors may consider the following prior to the arrival of a second emergency:

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<sup>17</sup> Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Arrangement. Public Law 105-381. 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. 112 Stat. 3402. (November 12, 1998). Retrieved from: <https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ381/PLAW-105publ381.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> National Mass Care Strategy. (May 5, 2020). *COVID-19 Non-Congregate Sheltering Framework*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID19Non-CongregateShelteringFramework.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> National Mass Care Strategy. (April 15, 2020). *Sheltering COVID-19 Affected Areas*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ShelteringInCOVIDAffectedAreas.pdf>.



- **Supplies and Stockpiles:** As the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) was depleted during the COVID-19 response, states may consider evaluating the feasibility of developing their own caches of medical supplies for use during emergencies.<sup>20</sup> Along with masks, ventilators, gloves, and infusion pumps, states may also consider stockpiling more routine disaster supplies such as ready-to-heat meals, pop-up tents, fuel, and generators.
  - **Delaware** maintains a significant amount of medical supplies in its In State Stockpile (ISS) and is designed to provide access to critical medications ahead of the SNS.<sup>21</sup>
  - In the wake of Hurricanes Lee and Irene, **New York** expanded its state stockpile program to include a tenth warehouse to serve the western region of the state. The stockpile pre-positions light towers, sandbags, cots, and generators closer to areas that may be struck by severe winter weather or flooding.<sup>22</sup>
  - If COVID-19 operations slow, states may consider using the supplies and equipment acquired during the response in alternate capacities. Hospital beds can be transformed into shelter cots and general medical supplies can be used for treating traumatic injuries rather than infectious disease.
  
- **Private Sector Partnership:** The challenges of COVID-19 have provided an opportunity for states and the private sector to rapidly develop solutions together. Public-private partnership has rarely been stronger, and governors can continue to engage businesses and other non-governmental entities in providing technical assistance, innovation, and resources during concurrent events.
  - **Indiana** utilized its economic development agency, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), to secure PPE, connect local health networks with critical equipment, and encourage local manufacturers to switch production to supplies in shortage.<sup>23</sup>
  - **Idaho**, facing a shortage of N95 masks, was able to develop a partnership with private sector medical equipment suppliers to decontaminate used N95 masks to extend their usage life for healthcare workers and first responders.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Miroff, Nick. (April 1, 2020). *Protective Gear in National Stockpile Is Nearly Depleted, Dhs Officials Say*. The Washington Post. Retrieved from: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-protective-gear-stockpile-depleted/2020/04/01/44d6592a-741f-11ea-ae50-7148009252e3\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-protective-gear-stockpile-depleted/2020/04/01/44d6592a-741f-11ea-ae50-7148009252e3_story.html)

<sup>21</sup> Delaware Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health. (March 2010). *In-State Stockpile (ISS)*. [Public Information]. Retrieved from: <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/instatestockpi.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> New York, Office of the Governor. (January 17, 2018). *Governor Cuomo Announces Operational Opening of State's 10<sup>th</sup> Emergency Stockpile in Western New York*. [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-operational-opening-states-10th-emergency-stockpile-western-new-york>.

<sup>23</sup> Indiana, Office of the Governor. (April 13, 2020). *Gov. Holcomb Announces Indiana Businesses Working to Support COVID-19 Response*. [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://calendar.in.gov/site/gov/event/gov-holcomb-announces-indiana-businesses-working-to-support-covid-19-response/>; Indiana, Office of the Governor. (April 25, 2020). *State Doubles PPE Orders, Donations with Totals Topping 6.3 Million*. [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://calendar.in.gov/site/gov/event/state-doubles-ppe-orders-donations-with-totals-topping-63-million/>

<sup>24</sup> Idaho, Office of the Governor. (May 6, 2020). *Idaho Partners with Battelle to Decontaminate N95 Masks at No Cost*. [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://gov.idaho.gov/pressrelease/idaho-partners-with-battelle-to-decontaminate-n95-masks-at-no-cost/>.

- **Kentucky** engaged the state Chamber of Commerce, the Kentucky Distillers' Association, and major grocery store chains, like Kroger, to build out a network of sites the public could use to get tested, secure PPE, manufacture hand sanitizer and build long-term resilience against cascading events linked to the pandemic.<sup>25</sup>

### Public Information and Warnings

Both before and during an incident, communication with the public is essential to ensuring safety, protecting property, eliciting cooperation, and instilling confidence. The challenge of providing timely, accurate, and actionable information will only be amplified by concurrent incidents. Governors may consider the following strategies:

- **Safety Messages:** Traditional protective guidance may conflict with COVID-19 mitigation practices. For instance, given the infection risk of public places like grocery stores, parents may consider leaving children in the car to protect them from the virus. Governors may need to clarify that during an extreme heat event, the risk of heat injury in a hot car exceeds that of COVID-19 exposure. Governors may need to provide frequent communications around risk prioritization and clarify conventional guidance.
- **Communication Channels:** With many people self-isolating in their homes, governors and their communications teams may need to adjust their messaging strategies. Reliance on word-of-mouth, passive diffusion of messages, and social cues may not be enough to reach people who are disconnected from their communities. COVID-19 has also changed media consumption, with more of the public turning to the internet, rather than traditional media, for information.<sup>26</sup> As plans are amended to account for COVID-19, governors may want to work with their public information officers to identify strategies to achieve maximum message penetration if stay-at-home orders are still in place.
- **Message Fatigue:** Prolonged exposure to frequent alerts and warnings about COVID-19 may leave the public desensitized to government warnings and disengaged from public information. Some individuals and families are actively disconnecting from news and other media as a means to reduce stress and anxiety, but this may leave them vulnerable in the event of an emergency that requires rapid action.<sup>27</sup>
- **Mis- and Dis-Information Campaigns:** Nation-state actors, as well as domestic hate and anti-government groups, may use the chaos of disaster to advance propaganda, spread

<sup>25</sup> Kentucky, Office of the Governor. (April 16, 2020). *Gov. Beshear Expands Testing, Regional Partnership*. [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&prId=131>; Kentucky, Office of the Governor. (May 4, 2020). *Gov. Beshear Details Expanded Reopening of Health Care, Businesses*. [Press Release]. Retrieved from: <https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&prId=152>

<sup>26</sup> Koeze, Ella and Popper, Nathaniel. (April 7, 2020). *The Virus Changed the Way We Internet*. The New York Times. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/07/technology/coronavirus-internet-use.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Polakovic, Gary. (March 31, 2020). *To Manage COVID-19 Stress, Develop Healthy New Habits and Consume News in Moderation*. USC News. Retrieved from: <https://news.usc.edu/167512/covid-19-stress-coping-healthy-habits-usc-social-science-experts/>.





inaccuracies, and amplify rumors.<sup>28</sup> While attribution is difficult, countries like Russia, China, and Iran have already exploited the COVID-19 emergency to sow discord between the public and the government; a concurrent disaster will provide a greater opportunity to advance that mission.<sup>29</sup> Governors should ensure their teams have plans to identify and control rumors, promote trusted sources of information, and provide accurate counternarratives to dangerous reports.

**Conclusion:** COVID-19 adds significant complexity to a state’s emergency management strategy. Not only do public health considerations need to be woven into every plan, the sheer magnitude of the pandemic has exhausted critical state resources for response. Governors can, however, use careful strategies to offset system deficiencies and address the asymmetric threat of concurrent disasters. NGA will continue to track this issue and deliver lessons learned to state homeland security advisors and other stakeholders.

### Other Key Resources

- [FEMA’s COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for the 2020 Hurricane Season](#)
- [National Mass Care Strategy’s COVID-19 Congregate Sheltering Guidelines](#)
- [NGA Governors Guide to Mass Evacuation](#)
- [Pew Charitable Trusts: How States Pay for Disasters in an Era of Rising Costs](#)
- [NGA Memo on State Cyber Disruption Plans](#)
- [CDC’s Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Manual & Tools](#)

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<sup>28</sup> Roose, Kevin. (May 20, 2020). *Get Ready for a Vaccine Information War*. The New York Times. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/technology/coronavirus-vaccine-disinformation.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Emmott, Robin. (March 18, 2020). *Russia Deploying Coronavirus Disinformation to Sow Panic in West, EU Document Says*. Reuters. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-disinformation/russia-deploying-coronavirus-disinformation-to-sow-panic-in-west-eu-document-says-idUSKBN21518F>; DiResta, Renee, Molter, Vanessa, and Stamos, Alex. (April 27, 2020). *As Chinese Propaganda on COVID-19 Grows, U.S. Social Media Must Act*. The Washington Post. Retrieved from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/04/27/chinese-propaganda-covid-19-grows-us-social-media-must-act/>; U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson. (March 23, 2020). *Iran: COVID-19 Disinformation Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/iran-covid-19-disinformation-fact-sheet/>.

