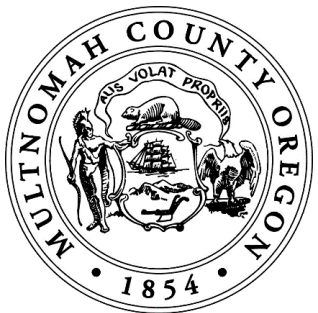# Emergency Management:
"It's worth auditing"

Photo: Mult. Co. Communications

PNIAF 2019
Caroline Zavitkovski, Multnomah County
Elliot Shuford, Oregon Metro

Metro Auditor

Emergency Management is important for protecting life, safety, and property.

Photos: US Geological Survey

US Geological Survey

Mult. Co. Communications

Key terms

EOC (Emergency Operations Center):
The place where emergency coordination happens

COOP (Continuity of Operations):
Plan/process to restore operations in a particular order

Mult. Co. Communications

Emergency Managers coordinate

Emergency Management:
- Activates the Emergency Operation Center
- Coordinates support for the response

Response examples:
- Evacuate residents
- Provide medical treatment
- Distribute water
- Clear roads

Mult. Co. Communications
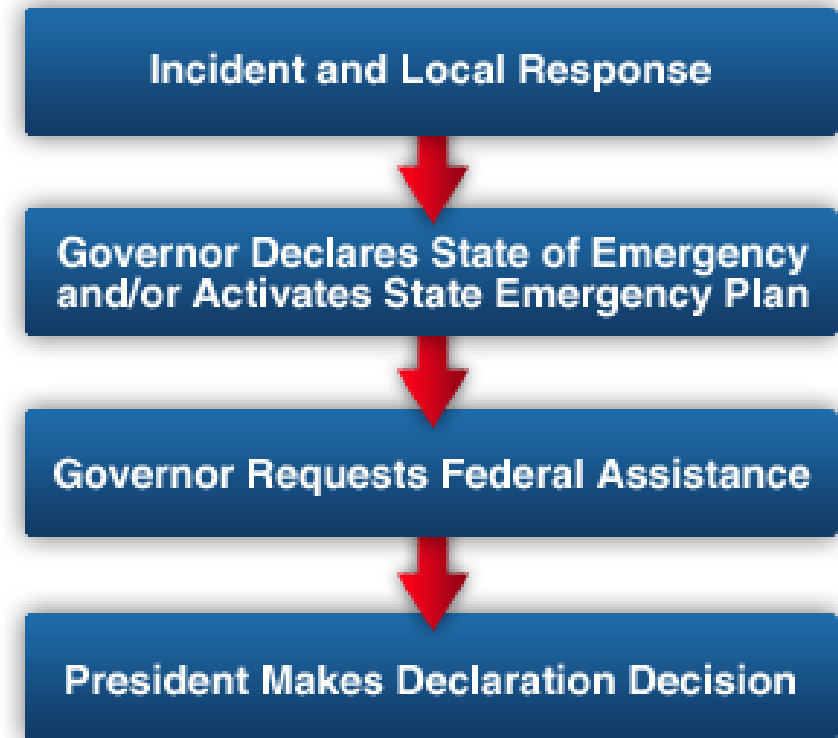
All response starts locally

Then possible assistance from:

Other local governments
"*mutual aid*"

State government

Federal government
- *Disaster declaration and assistance*
- *Reimbursement of local expenses*

Incident and Local Response

Governor Declares State of Emergency and/or Activates State Emergency Plan

Governor Requests Federal Assistance

President Makes Declaration Decision

FEMA

Emergency management looks different in different jurisdictions

	Multnomah County	Metro
Defined role	✓	
Required to have Program, manager & EOC	✓	
First Responders *Police, fire, EMS*	✓	
Other responders *Public works, health/human services, animal services*	✓	✓

Multnomah County Audit

Emergency Management
Eagle Creek Fire offers lessons to improve County readiness for future disasters.
July 2018

Image from the Eagle Creek Fire. Photo source: Multnomah County Communications, Flickr

Multnomah County Auditor's Office
Steve March, Multnomah County Auditor

2018 Knighton Exemplary Award

Report Highlights

What We Found
The Multnomah County Office of Emergency Management's performance in the Eagle Creek Fire was generally well regarded by partners. As most emergency events and exercises do, the experience also revealed areas for improvement. We found that:
- To staff the Emergency Operations Center, the County drew on assistance from neighboring counties and cities, and some less experienced County staff. Increasing the number of County staff with training and experience, would improve preparedness for future large incidents.
- The Office did not ensure the federal reimbursement application included expenses from all involved departments. The application did include the largest expenses.

The County faces additional challenges in emergency management. We found that:
- The Office has set a three-year strategy, but lacks timelines or plans for implementation.
- Staffing challenges within the Office limit progress towards meeting its goals, including towards meeting nationally recognized accreditation standards.
- There is no central coordination for continuity of operations planning and some continuity of operations plans are outdated or incomplete.
- The Office is not using the Emergency Operations Center facility and lacks an alternative.

Why We Did This Audit
The Multnomah County Auditor included Emergency Management on the 2017-18 audit schedule. The Eagle Creek Fire provided a good opportunity to examine the Office's response to a large incident, and draw lessons for future improvements. While the Office is small, the County's Emergency Management program has far-reaching implications in protecting life, safety, and property; ensuring equity in disaster preparedness; and building resilience.

What We Recommend
- The Office should continue to build capacity for staffing the Emergency Operations Center. This can be accomplished by reporting on progress with identifying additional County staff, ensuring staff have adequate training, and establishing a tracking system.
- The Office should develop procedures to set expectations and clarify roles and responsibilities for expense reimbursement and continuity of operations planning.
- The Office should also take short-term steps to mitigate long-term challenges, including developing strategies to address turnover; improving short-term action planning; and developing Emergency Operations Center facility plans in line with intended usage.

The Eagle Creek Fire ignited 40 miles east of Portland, at the edge of Multnomah County
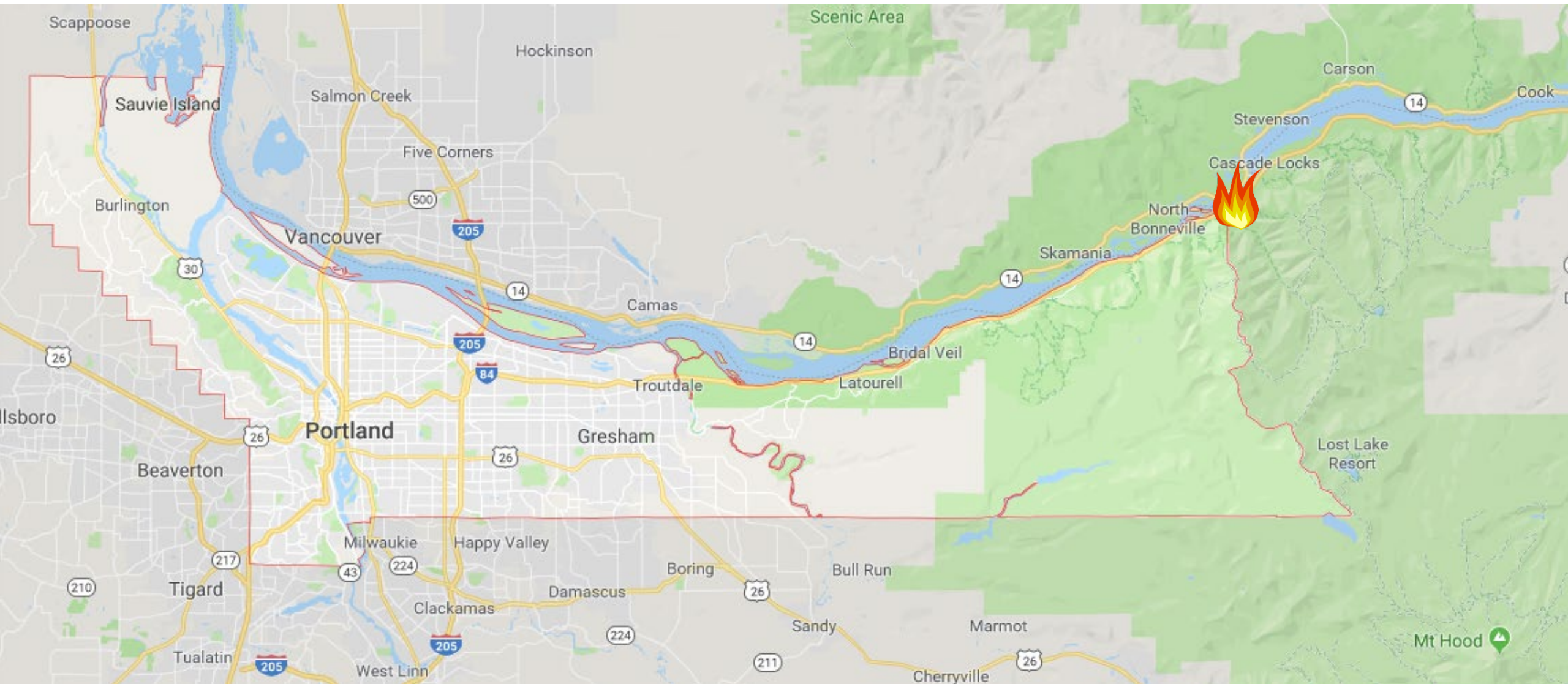
Eagle Creek Fire offered lessons to improve readiness.

Continuing to build capacity to staff the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), will improve disaster readiness.

Mult. Co. Communications

< 50% of EOC participants were County employees

Office should establish a training tracking system.

A tracking system will enable the Office to target training gaps and track progress.

Mult. Co. Communications

Office's aim: 250 people trained
Current status: unclear, 127 people on contact list

Office should provide more oversight of expense tracking and reimbursement.

The County submitted an application for expense reimbursement from FEMA.

Eagle Creek Fire	
Total County expenses	Likely recovery through FEMA
$605K	$367K

But not all departments analyzed or recorded expenses.

Mult. Co. Communications

Continuity of operations (COOP) planning lacked central coordination.

COOP is important, so that the County can maintain critical services when disaster strikes.

Multnomah County

County faces additional challenges for readiness.

The Office's priorities and goals should be more actionable and transparent.

Staffing challenges limit the amount of work that can be done to prepare.

The EOC facility is rarely used.

Mult. Co. Auditor's Office

Recommendations
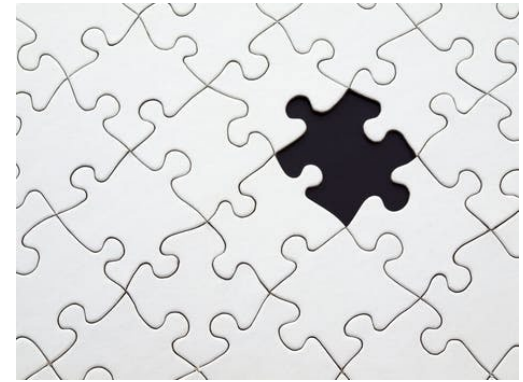
Pexels

We recommended that the Office:

- Continue to build capacity for staffing the EOC
- Develop procedures for expense reimbursement and COOP planning
- Develop strategies to reduce staff turnover
- Set realistic action plans with timelines
- Develop EOC facility plans in line with intended usage

Audit Impacts
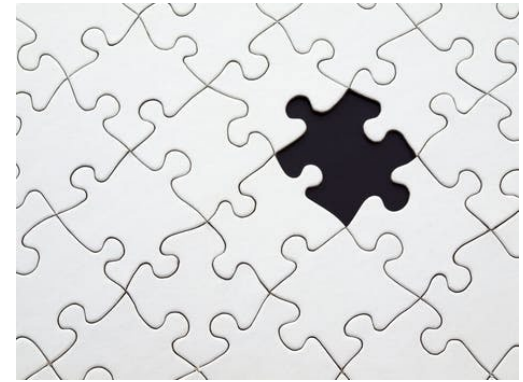
Pexels

Since our audit, the auditee has:

- Submitted an appended FEMA application
- Written a new training plan, citing our audit
- Held multiple trainings, including EOC training
- Recruited for EOC finance position
- Allocated staff for COOP planning
- Launched a new County-wide COOP effort

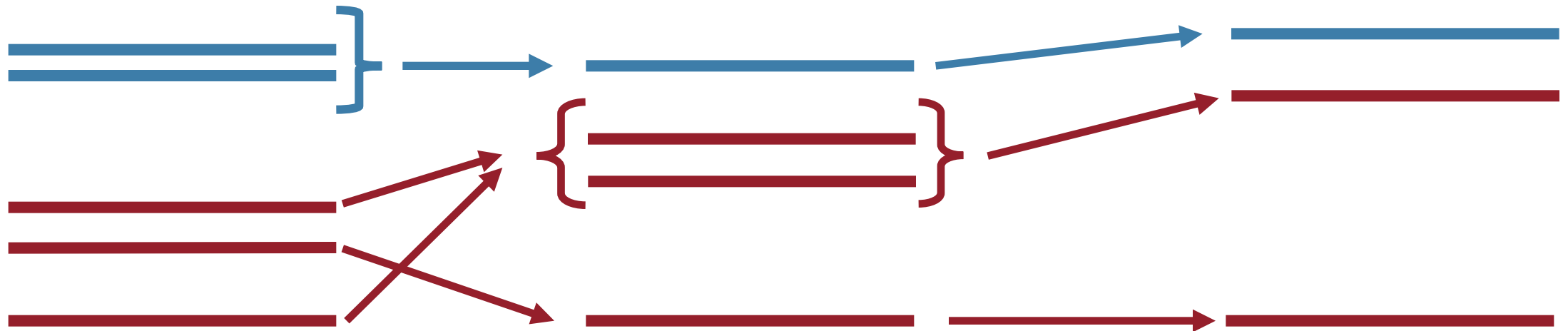# Metro Audit

Which criteria to use?

Emergency Management
Accreditation Program

NFPA 1600 Standard on
Disaster/Emergency
Management (& COOP)

Interviews with local
emergency managers

Created five categories
'the basics' of emergency management

- Roles & Authority

- Administrative Procedures

- Emergency Inventory & Resources

- Continuity of Operations

- Communication

Metro Audit: 4 Case Studies

Eagle Creek Fire (2017)

Curtis Perry/Flickr
creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0

January 2017 Storm

Metro

Metro Audit: 4 Case Studies

Metro headquarters Flood (2016)

Metro

December 2015 Storm

Metro

Metro relied primarily on employee experience and initiative

Event	Roles & Authority	Procedures	Inventory & Resources	Continuity	Communication
MRC Flood	●	○	●	○	●
Eagle Creek Fire	○	○	○	○	●
January '17 Storm	●	○	○	○	●
December '15 Storm	○	○	○	○	○

● Incident management and employee experience & initiative

○ Employee experience & initiative

Roles and authority were unclear

- Found a lack of clarity for roles, responsibilities

- Some authorities were unclear

- Several recommendations aimed at providing clarity
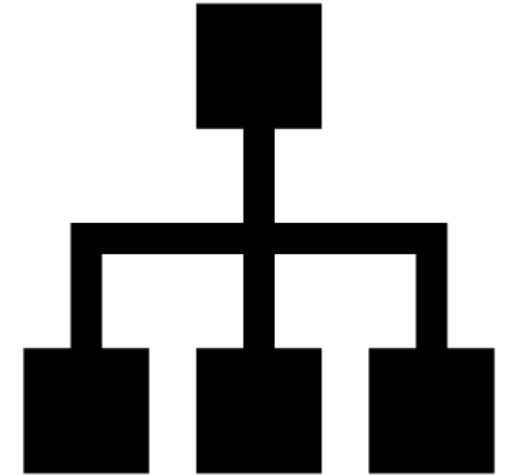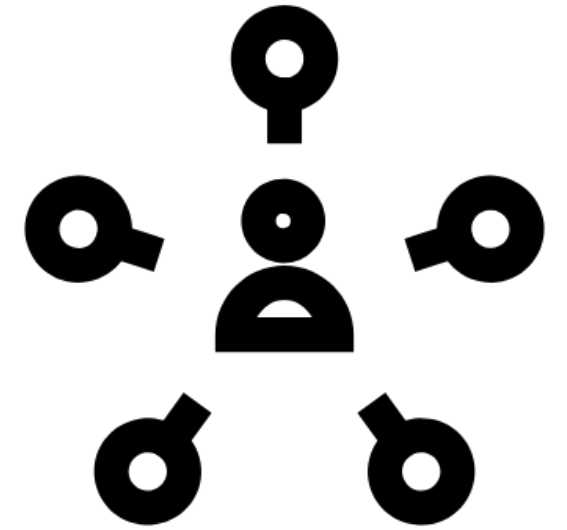
Noun Project

Procedures were informal

- Had emergency operations plan (not used)

- Few procedures were written

- E.g. assessing damage and reporting to counties

- Recommended at a minimum to develop written procedures for that process

To activate the Metro Emergency Operations Plan, contact the Crisis management team coordinator (or alternate) located on page E-4 of this publication.
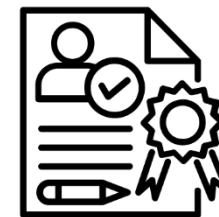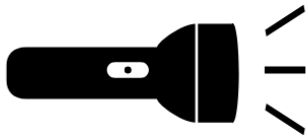
Version 4.0, published October 2007

NE Grand Ave, Portland, OR 97232 (503) 797-1615 • www.metro-region.org

Metro

Need to identify resources prior to disaster

- Inventory should include physical resources, but also employees with special training or skills

- No inventory of emergency resources

- Some agreements were in place

Noun Project

Continuity was improvised

- No COOP plan at Metro

- Had to make decisions on the fly

- Impact would be much greater for bigger incident

Metro

# Backup communication system and mass notification needed

Pexels

- No backup system

- Largely used email and phones

- No disruption of electricity/internet meant no impact

- No mass notification system for employees

Both audits found…

FEMA

- Overall, OK performance….
  ….But not ready for 'the Big One.'

- Challenges with reimbursement process

- No central ownership of Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP)

- The importance of using small-medium sized events for practice
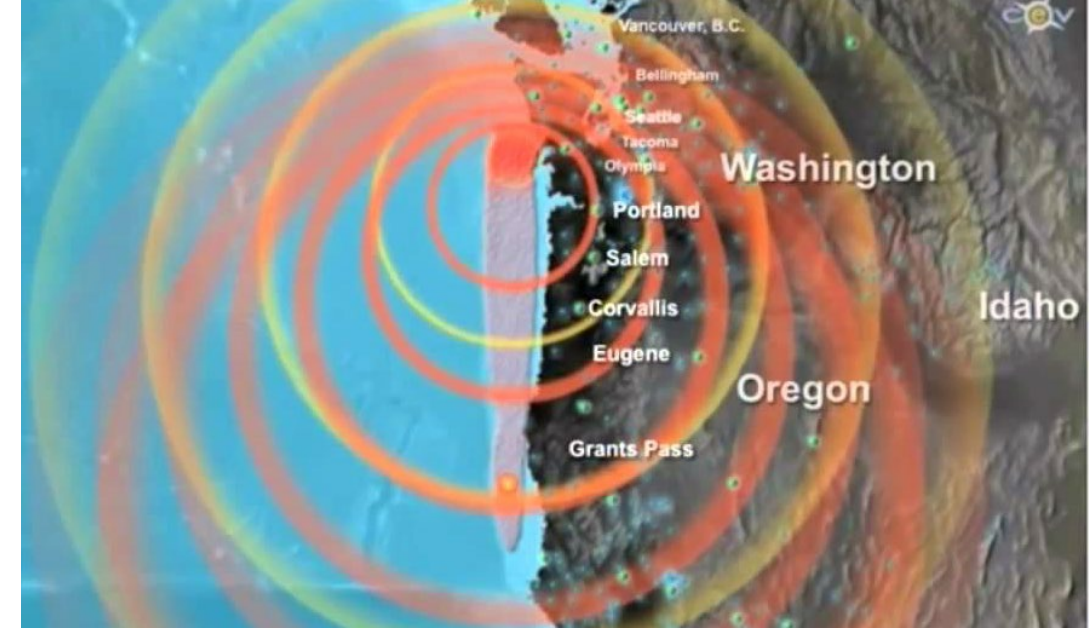
Improving readiness for future disasters.

"The underlying challenge in our region is that risks like earthquakes don't come along often, but when they do, we need to be ready."

-Stakeholder interview Multnomah County Audit

FEMA

PNIAF states had relatively few disasters compared to other states

Total number of federally-declared disasters 1953-2016 (excluding fires)
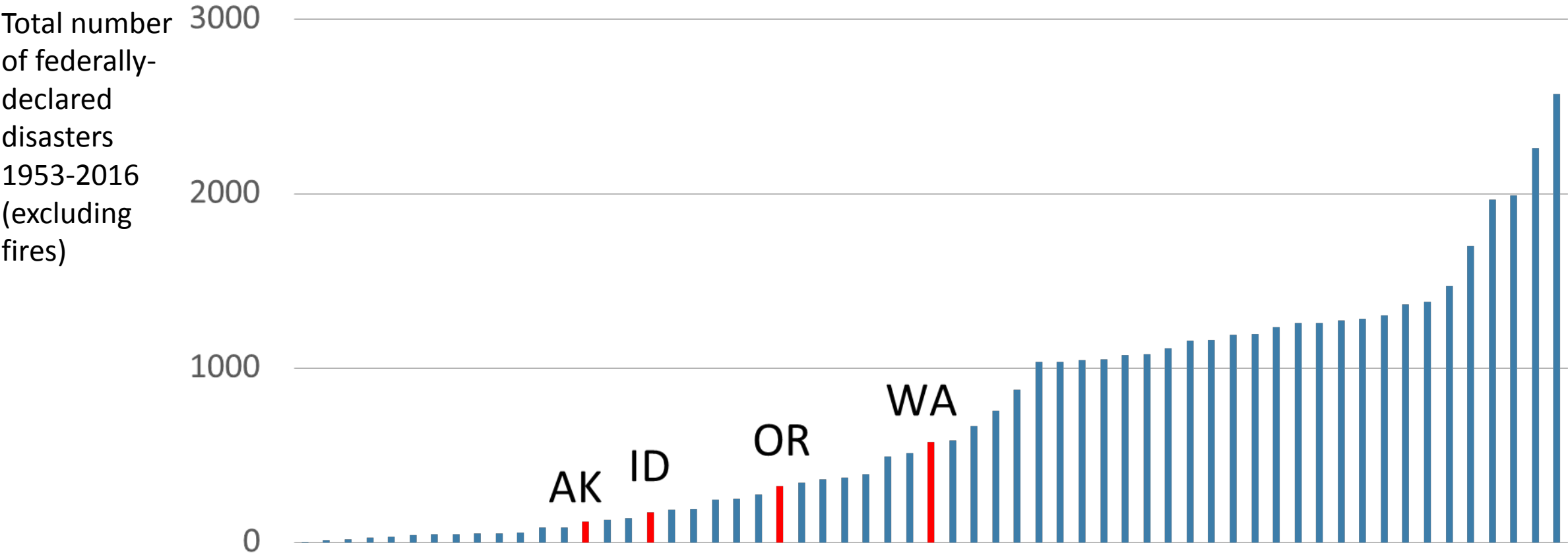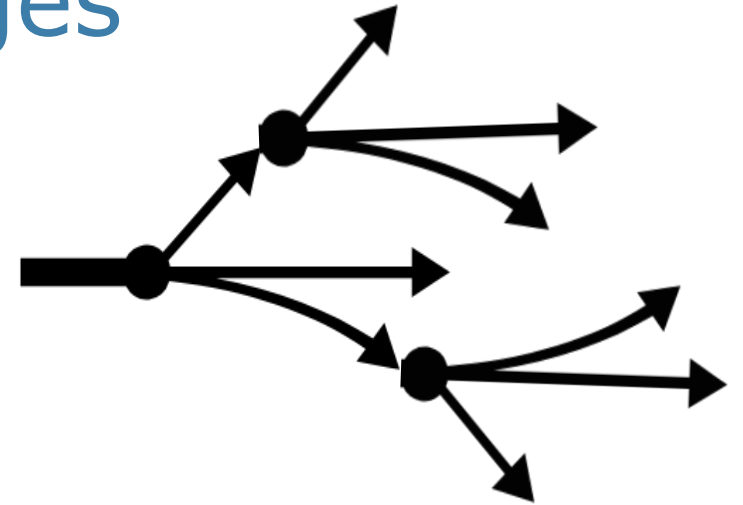
Common Methodological Challenges
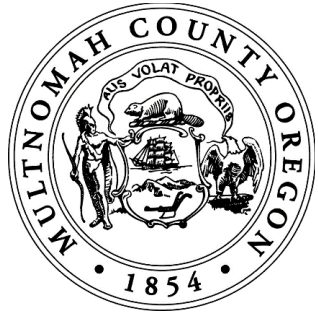
Managing scope

Adapting criteria

Right-sizing recommendations

Noun Project

Questions?

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US Geological Survey