

THE HOOSIER RESPONDER

COVID-19

April, 2020

#IN this together

HELP EACH OTHER

Communicating During a Crisis

IN THIS ISSUE:

- A Timeline of Escalation
- The Emergency Operations Center
- COVID-19 EMS Support
- IDHS Adapting During an Outbreak

STAY HOME



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

We are living in an unprecedented time, one of those generational moments that will live with us forever. For our country, this is a 9/11-type event, something we will recall with vivid reality, even well after this public emergency is resolved. With that said, Hoosiers are bringing the fight. Look no further than our community of first responders for examples of how we WILL beat this COVID-19 threat: with the determination and sacrifice that lives within all Indiana residents.



I took over as executive director on Jan. 6 at the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. Three months later, we are now in a serious public health emergency, the majority of IDHS employees are forced to work from home and our state's first responders (the focal point of so much we do on a daily basis) are in the trenches daily protecting every day Hoosiers from this threat. Our State Emergency Operations Center remains at a Level 1 status, requiring partners from across state agencies, the Indiana National Guard and others to show up everyday to help get resources to where they are needed and put plans in motion as part of the national response. While I wish we could change our circumstances now as a country, I am extremely impressed with the way our teams are responding as well as the difference they are making. That is the silver lining those of us at IDHS are focused on, because we know these tests will make us stronger as an agency and as a state.

While I haven't had many moments to sit back and reflect on the IDHS role in Indiana, some things are unmistakable. Our first responder community flat-out gets to work when they are needed the most. We agree, of course, more protective equipment is needed in the field and we're working hard to obtain it ... yet we have heard little in the way of complaints about people not wanting to do the jobs they are trained to do. We have not heard of people questioning their roles, only how they are going to respond to that next emergency or how they intend to work with one another to get the job done the best they can. Some IDHS employees have been reallocated to different roles within the agency, again, with no complaints and an especially can-do attitude.

We train for emergencies, disasters and all hazards in Indiana. We plan for these life-changing events and every contingency that may come as a result. We are seeing now how that training is implemented and how extremely important it is for our state in its time of need.

As a lifelong firefighter, I understand the urge to rush in that burning building to do the job we're trained to do. It's how public safety personnel operate. Hoosiers today have stepped up and embraced the same philosophy amid this COVID-19 threat. I'm proud to call Indiana home, because, when we get through this to the other side, we're all going to be proud of how we responded and overcame this health threat. Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Cox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Steve Cox



A TIMELINE OF ESCALATION

Dec. 31 The World Health Organization (WHO) is informed of a pneumonia of an unknown cause in Wuhan, China.

Jan. 20 First U.S. case of COVID-19 is reported in Washington state.

Jan. 31 United States declares a public health emergency.

Mar. 06 Indiana announces its first case of COVID-19 and Gov. Eric Holcomb declares a public health emergency.

Mar. 11 WHO declares COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

Mar. 16 Indiana announces the state's first death from COVID-19. The State Emergency Operations Center is activated to its highest status (Level 1) and the Indiana National Guard is activated. The governor directs health-care providers to cancel or postpone elective and nonurgent procedures and disallows dine-in food service.

Mar. 19 All K–12 schools in Indiana are ordered to close through May 1. Utility companies are prohibited from terminating service. Evictions or foreclosures are prohibited. The state tax filing deadline is extended to July 15. The state's primary election is moved to June 2.

Mar. 23 The Stay-At-Home Order is issued, requiring all residents to stay at home unless following social distancing outdoors or at an essential business or activity. It also prohibits gatherings of more than 10 people and closes all places of public amusement.

Mar. 30 The Indiana State Department of Health is given the capability to create temporary patient facilities. Public emergency personnel not currently licensed to be temporarily able to provide health care services.

Mar. 31 Restrictions on in-person dining services are extended through April 6.

Apr. 02 All K–12 schools are directed to finish the rest of the 2019-2020 school year via remote learning.

Apr. 06 Stay-At-Home Order extended to Apr. 20. All campgrounds closed.

Apr. 07 Governor issues an order that health-care providers without an active license, including recently retired or inactive EMS professionals, may serve again in health care during the crisis.

Apr. 10 Gov. Holcomb Announces Taskforce to Track COVID-19 Spending.

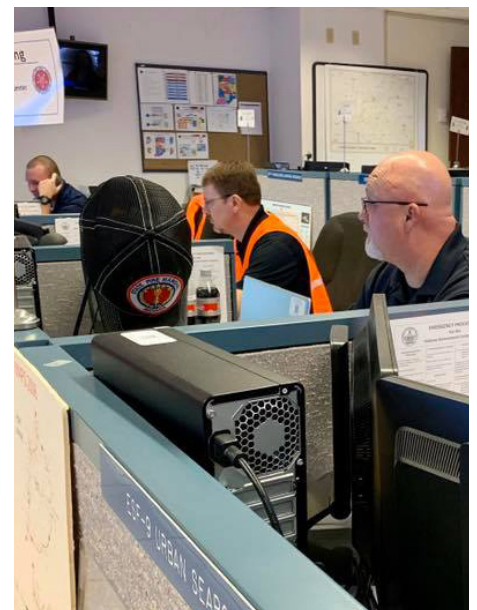


THE INDIANA STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

On March 16, Governor Eric Holcomb activated the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to a Level 1, engaging all sections and emergency support functions (ESFs) to help fight COVID-19. The SEOC functions as a coordination point for agencies responding to the crisis.

While each shift consists of different personnel and different tasks based on operational needs across the state, the SEOC keeps strategy and logistics planners busy coordinating with state agencies and some private industries to respond effectively. As of this publication, the EOC has completed nearly 40 shift periods with dozens of state agency staff.

The SEOC is all about bringing the right people together to make sure federal, state and local partners have what they need to help protect Hoosiers.



IDHS PROVIDES PROACTIVE MEASURES TO KEEP INDIANA EMS SAFE FROM COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause safety concerns for personnel in all areas of health care, and emergency medical services are no exception. In an effort to keep Indiana EMS responders informed on how to safely perform their duties, the IDHS EMS Section recently published the [EMS COVID-19 Manual](#), a living document designed to “provide guidance and recommended protocols related to COVID-19 for EMS agencies around the state.”

The manual’s information, in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), contains a compilation of all the current rules, waivers and guidelines developed by IDHS since the beginning of Indiana’s COVID-19 outbreak. As of April 1, the manual contains three different waivers, dispatch guidance outlining expanded COVID-19 questioning and alternative protocols as well as EMS operational and clinical guidance on personal protective equipment and exposure.

“The COVID-19 emergency has really transformed EMS,” said Indiana EMS Director Kraig Kinney. “From initial 911 call taking and screening to frontline response, we have had to adapt



to this ever-changing situation.”

As IDHS continues to help Indiana EMS proactively adapt to COVID-19 challenges, personal protective equipment (PPE) has proven to be the most challenging obstacle yet.

“The lack of available PPE and increasing rate of exposure in Hoosiers across Indiana are two of the biggest challenges Indiana EMS is facing right now,” said Dr. Michael Kaufmann, Indiana EMS medical director. “Patient acuity has risen, and the additional PPE requirements make it significantly harder to move rapidly between patients.”

Despite these hurdles, the EMS Section frequently monitors the situation and identifies new ways to keep Indiana EMS responders safe, while simultaneously providing Hoosiers with efficient emergency medical services.

“Moving forward, we are still going to continue focusing

on PPE,” Kaufmann said. “But we are also going to increase the focus on testing EMS responders for exposure, and of course keep EMS moving and available to care for patients.”

A new tool, EMResource, is tracking PPE supplies of agencies across the state in addition to staffing—all intent on ensuring adequate service will continue during the emergency. While PPE is important right now, the IDHS EMS Section said keeping EMS personnel well-informed and updated with information is also crucial.

“Information is key to protecting our responders,” Kinney explained. “COVID-19 is still relatively unknown in terms of our medical knowledge. Therefore, our recommendations will change as we continue to learn more about it.”

See the Emergency Medical Services page for all guidance documents.



COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS

Indiana residents are depending on local, state and federal government to provide timely information to help them make the right decisions. Agencies are encouraged to help boost messaging related to COVID-19 safety. The best way to educate residents is to retweet and share information from established, knowledgeable sources:



OTHER RESOURCES

COVID-19 UPDATES

The coronavirus.in.gov case dashboard is updated daily at noon ET, and the *StateHealthIN* accounts post updates right after. Feel free to retweet these and other posts to keep your residents up-to-date on what is happening around the state.

Agencies can also keep up-to-date through:

- [Gov. Eric J. Holcomb's newsroom](#)
- [The Indiana State Department of Health newsroom](#)

The governor's [weekday press briefings](#) are also available online Monday through Friday at 2:30 p.m. ET.

KEEP THE JIC IN THE LOOP

Eighteen state agencies are represented in the State of Indiana Joint Information Center (JIC), and four local joint information centers and public information officers have been keeping in touch. The JIC would love to be kept in the loop regarding what you're seeing and doing; send press releases and other updates to jic@jic.in.gov and esf15@dhs.in.gov (external affairs).

↓ ↓

PLEASE **DO NOT** ENTER THIS FACILITY IF YOU SELF-SCREEN POSITIVE FOR ANY OF THESE



FEVER



COUGH



**SHORTNESS
OF BREATH**



**SORE
THROAT**



**HEADACHE/
BODY ACHES**

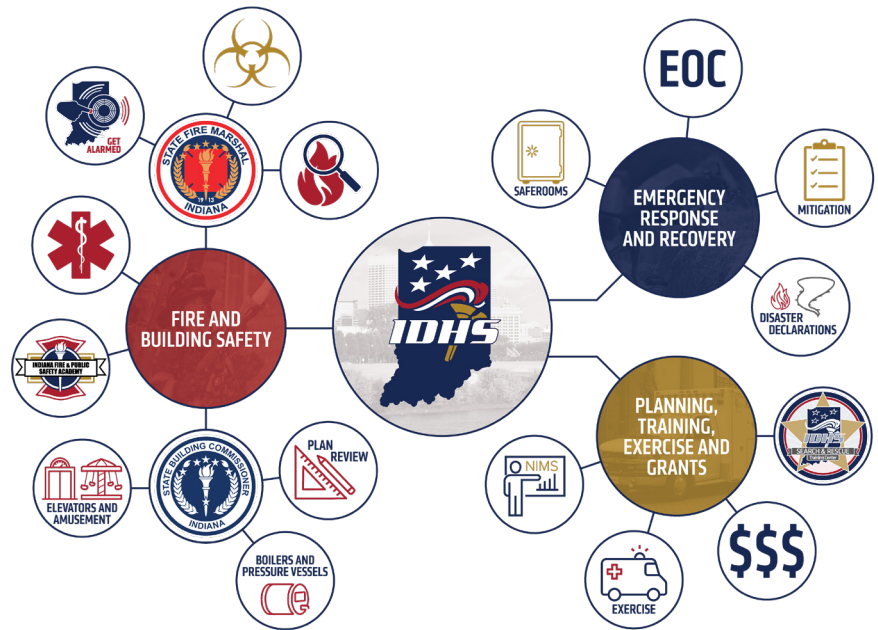
**OR CONTACT WITH A CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED
COVID-19 POSITIVE PATIENT WITHIN THE LAST 14 DAYS**

Self-screening means a person should monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperature and remaining alert for respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, body aches, etc). Anyone self-monitoring should be provided a plan for whom to contact if they develop fever or respiratory symptoms during the self-monitoring period to determine whether medical evaluation is needed. They should also consider if they have any close recent contact with anyone who tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous 14 days. If someone screens themselves positive they should not report to work and definitely not enter this facility.



IDHS TEAMS ADAPTING DURING OUTBREAK

The 260 employees of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) have seen many changes since early March, as the agency followed Gov. Eric Holcomb’s directives for state employees in light of the constantly changing COVID-19 crisis. The State Emergency Operations Center was activated to its highest level and has been working around the clock every day of the week. Regular office and field activities have either been suspended, minimized or transitioned to being done at employees’ homes.



Work for the IDHS Building Plan Review Section, which reviews Class I construction plans for compliance to rules and building codes, has continued with most of the review staff operating remotely since March 23, which is when the governor issued [Executive Order 20-08](#) (the Stay-At-Home order). State Building Commissioner Craig Burgess said the building design community had plenty of projects in the pipeline when the COVID-19 outbreak began, so his team’s workload has remained steady.

“We’ve had a few regular customers ask sincerely how we’re doing, which is always nice, and we’ve had some semi-panicked emails from others, inquiring about our turnaround

times and how the virus might affect them. So far it hasn’t, and it probably won’t as long as our group stays healthy and productive,” he said. “Virus or not, though, we have a statutory time limit on our reviews, and we will meet that schedule.”

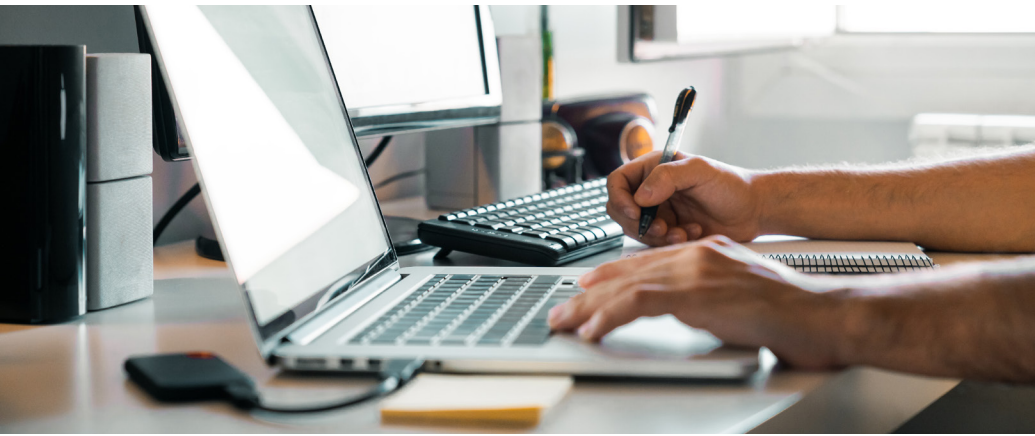
Teams with field operations have seen drastic changes in how business is being done, as certificates and licenses in different areas have been extended temporarily. The Code Enforcement section scaled back inspections weeks ago and anticipates further limitations, said Section Chief Kristin Settle. For the Boilers and Pressure Vessels (BPV) Section, only inspections on state-owned vessels are being conducted, while most insurance companies have suspended their own inspection

operations. Similarly, the Elevators & Amusement Rides (E&A) Section is performing only limited inspections.

Settle said that due to restrictions on gatherings and businesses closing, the number of event and building permits being requested has greatly decreased, and code enforcement officers are only conducting “absolutely necessary” inspections where a business needs an approval or license in order to open. This includes locations that could be opened as auxiliary patient locations during COVID-19’s peak.

“The biggest impact has been on construction design release inspections. We are no longer conducting those, and neither are a lot of local

(continued on next page)



building officials,” Settle said. “Contractors and the design professionals on the projects must continue to build to code to ensure quality projects across the State of Indiana.”

The limitations on inspections has resulted in shifting to other helpful tasks at times for the E&A section.

“If inspectors or office staff don’t have enough work from an operational standpoint, we have been reviewing and correcting the data in our system, taking practice exams to prepare for inspector certification and creating training materials,” said Matt Cronley, E&A section chief, adding that some newer field inspectors have been lending a hand to the Critical Industries Hotline that has been answering the public’s questions relating to the Stay-At-Home executive order.

Working remotely is not new for Code Enforcement’s field staff, but the decreased inspection workload has been positive, allowing for time to take care of other needed tasks.

“Many of our team are taking this opportunity to study code for tests, do self-development with online trainings, and create or finish job-related projects,” Settle said. “The impact of having the time and availability to do those things during this time will be a benefit to each team member, especially as we get ‘back to normal’ and will be extremely busy for the remainder of the year catching up on inspections and the influx of permits that we anticipate.”

Working from home has meant teams have had to use communication software, such as Microsoft Teams, to stay in touch and coordinate efforts. Three sections—Code Enforcement, BPV and E&A—all plan to continue using Teams regularly after the pandemic is over.

“Conducting business electronically has saved our section time and money. Prior to this event, it was never considered realistic to handle as much business electronically as smoothly as we are now. There’s still a little bit of an

adjustment being made for some, but for the most part, this approach is here to stay,” Cronley said.

The Indiana Fire & Public Safety Academy’s staff is working virtually, and it is working out well.

“My staff members are all turning in their daily logs and working hard, getting a lot of work done without distractions,” said Wade Walling, Academy administrator.

Social distancing has become a watchword in 2020, and working from home puts its own spin on the concept, as team members have become far removed from their cubicle-mates and the camaraderie that comes from being in the same place.

Alan Bunk, building plan review section chief, said a member of his team described the isolation of working from home as “working from some invisible planet.” Building Commissioner Burgess said during the first week of remote work, a senior reviewer sent the team a message asking how everyone was doing, which prompted replies with photos of the team’s various home office setups, including snacks on hand. He said it was a “welcome injection of community” during the unfamiliar solitude of the home office.



FIRST RESPONDERS: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONCERNS, EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND TRAUMA

First responders are usually the first on the scene to face challenging, dangerous and draining situations. They are also the first to reach out to disaster survivors and provide emotional and physical support to them. These duties, although essential to the entire community, are strenuous to first responders and with time put them at an increased risk of trauma. This is especially true now, during this worldwide time of pandemic.

One of the core risk factors for first responders is the pace of their work. First responders are always on the frontline facing highly stressful and risky calls. This tempo can lead to an inability to integrate work experiences. As a result,

depression, stress and post-traumatic stress symptoms, suicidal ideation and a host of other conditions have been reported. Here are some conditions to look out for:

DEPRESSION

Depression is commonly reported in first responders. It causes severe symptoms that affect how you feel, think and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating or working.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER/SYMPTOMS (PTSD)

PTSD is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary or dangerous event. People who have PTSD may feel stressed or frightened, even when they are not in danger.

SUICIDE IDEATION

Suicidal ideation refers to thinking about, considering or planning suicide. Suicide is among the leading causes of death in the United States.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Substance use disorder changes desires and priorities. It shifts behaviors and interferes with the ability to work and to have good relationships with friends and family.

To improve the behavioral health of first responders, a cooperative effort is needed between organizational leadership and coworkers to establish a work environment that provides adequate training, protects from overwork and supports people in seeking help when needed.

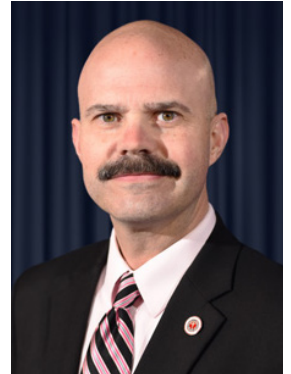


If you or someone you know needs help, call the Fire/EMS Helpline at 1-888-731-FIRE (3473). It was created specifically to meet the unique needs of firefighters, EMTs, rescue personnel and their families.

MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE MARSHAL

There is nothing like hitting the ground running! That's exactly what I've tried to do since joining IDHS on March 26 as Indiana State Fire Marshal amid the COVID-19 response.

I've witnessed the entire Indiana Fire Marshal staff contribute in a multitude of ways while trainings and all but priority safety inspections are on hold. However, progress continues to be made to establish a Fire and Public Safety Academy location to supplement the existing regional training model across Indiana. We have issued guidance to schools about required fire and disaster drills while working hard to support the needs of the public safety community.



The EMS Section has worked tirelessly to support the EMS community, truly the first layer of protection in this public health emergency. The [EMS COVID-19 Guidance Manual](#) produced by IDHS has been a critical tool to keep the EMS system operational. More than a dozen rules have been waived to allow EMS personnel to work as quickly and efficiently as possible, and the recent [Executive Order](#) will allow nonactive EMS personnel to return to serve to prepare for the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help our response function at full capacity, we continue to encourage all EMS provider agencies to log on to the EMResource tool. This database helps to track PPE needs for transporting agencies as well as any public safety staffing issues that arise during the response. We must monitor and track the health and viability of our public safety agencies to ensure we can adequately fight back against COVID-19. Local Emergency Management directors are helping to gather this information in each county, so please connect with your EMA to help us monitor this information. We need daily updates to this system from all EMS provider agencies.

I continue to hear from the public safety community across Indiana, and the stories of selfless service reinforce to me the value of first responders. We hear a lot of numbers about people falling ill and even dying from COVID-19, but for every tragic death there are a dozen stories of how first responders have bravely stood against this virus. Firefighters continue to do their job and answer every 911 call while much of the country is quarantined. EMS personnel face exposure every single day but continue to show up and take on the challenges before them. Public safety personnel epitomize what it means to be an essential service, and I'm proud to stand alongside these men and women across Indiana.

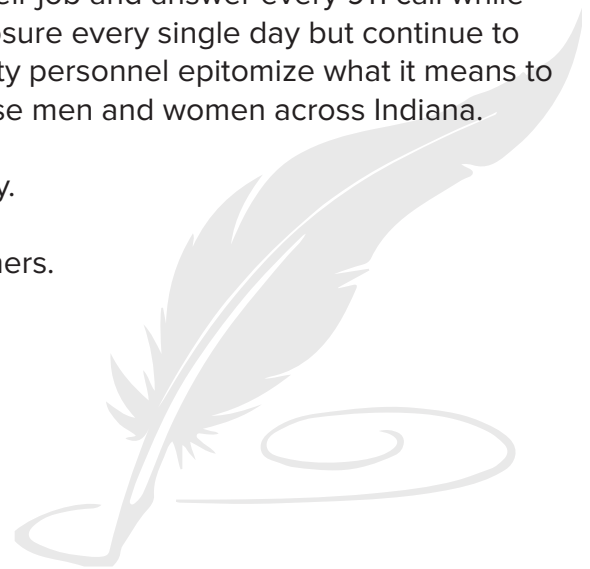
Finally, please consider donating blood during this emergency.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to serving others.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Thacker'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Joel M. Thacker



UPCOMING EVENTS

DONATE LIFE MONTH

OBSERVED: ALL OF APRIL

This year's theme of "Garden of Life" showcases everyone's opportunity to foster and enhance communities by becoming a registered organ, tissue and eye donor. Messaging on how to register as an organ donor can be shared on social media.

For additional ways to participate during Donate Life Month, visit donatelife.net.

BUILDING SAFETY MONTH

OBSERVED: ALL OF MAY

The annual international campaign strives to promote the need for adopting modern, regularly updated building codes. Every week of Building Safety Month has a theme highlighting a key safety area that is impacted by building codes.

For more information on the weekly themes and how to participate, visit iccsafe.org.

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

OBSERVED: ALL OF MAY

For the past 70 years, Mental Health Month has shared the importance of placing value in caring for one's mental health. The week's theme of "Tools 2 Thrive" aims to provide individuals with practical tools that can help improve mental health.

Visit mhanational.org for more information on Mental Health Month.

EMS WEEK

OBSERVED: MAY 17-23

The annual National EMS Week honors the dedication of EMS personnel and spreads awareness of medical safety. On Monday through Friday, a different theme will highlight specific areas of the EMS field such as National Stop the Bleed. IDHS proudly supports and appreciates the dedication of all Indiana EMS providers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Visit acep.org, for more information on the daily themes.

UPCOMING EVENTS

BUSINESS CONTINUITY AWARENESS WEEK

OBSERVED: MAY 18-22

The second annual Business Continuity Awareness Week highlights the importance of collaboration with the theme of “We are Stronger Together.” This year’s theme allows organizations the opportunity to examine where continuity of operations/government, or business continuity, plans and programs are reliant on other businesses.

Learn more about continuity of operations/government on the [IDHS website](#).

NATIONAL DAM SAFETY AWARENESS DAY

OBSERVED: MAY 31

In remembrance of the May 31, 1889, South Fork Dam failure in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, that killed more than 2,000 individuals, National Dam Safety Awareness Day encourages the public to learn about how they can prevent future dam failures. IDHS encourages areas to focus on low head dam safety as residents begin their summer activities.

To learn more about dam safety, visit [GetPrepared.in.gov](#).

AND DON'T FORGET, WE'RE



*The Indiana Department of Homeland Security works 24/7
to protect the people, property and prosperity of Indiana.*



*The Hoosier Responder is a publication of
The Indiana Department of Homeland Security.
Please direct any questions or comments to the
IDHS Office of Public Affairs at 317.234.6713 or pio@dhs.in.gov*

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