

BIG HORN COUNTY LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

317 N Custer Ave
BHC Sheriff's Office-
conference room
Hardin, MT, 59034



Members

BIG HORN COUNTY LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES January 5, 2026 1:00 PM

1. Introductions

The Big Horn County Local Emergency Planning Committee meeting began at 1:13pm on January 5th, 2026.

Introductions:

LEPC Coordinator: Sylvan Covers Up - BHC DES Director

LEPC Co-Coordinator: Jeramie Middlestead - BHC Sheriff

Dione Pretty On Top - Crow/Northern Cheyenne IHS Safety Officer

Meighan Barnes - Big Horn County Deputy Elections Administrator/Secretary for Superintendent of Schools

Glenn Madler - Phillips 66 North Region Field Technician

Billie Blackeagle - Westmoreland HR Manager

Chuck Vandersloot - Westmoreland Site Team Lead

Marcus Moulton - COP BIA

Jose Figueroa - BIA MM unit

Alyssa Pitsch - Big Horn County PHEP Coordinator/Admin. Assistant

Paula Small-Plenty - Big Horn Hospital Association Emergency Preparedness/HR

Albert Mendoza - CISA Region 8 Protective Security Advisor

John Small - Superintendent of Schools

2. Approve Minutes and Supporting Documents

Jeramie Middlestead motioned to approve minutes as presented; Paula Small-Plenty seconded the motion. Motion approved by committee as of 1:17pm.

3. Communications / Mail Slot

No Communications / Mail.

Work is ongoing to re-secure the lease for the Radio Hill repeater. Jeramie contacted State Trunking and will coordinate efforts related to repeater height and trunking. The goal is to tie county communications into the State system for clarity and interoperability. BIA is drafting an MOU to support this connection; however, the fee structure for tying in remains unclear.

The State is also working near the Wyoming border to improve access toward the Reno area. The Roads Department is addressing cellphone coverage issues, and the Sheriff's Office will explore tying coverage into the St. Xavier system. Sylvan is working on mitigation efforts to improve coverage and will conduct an area assessment, then follow up with AJ Espinoza regarding potential solutions.

A suggestion was made for the County to explore the use of portable mini repeaters to help boost coverage, as well as installing cellphone boosters in vehicles. Jose reminded the committee of the

existing cellphone tower near Nemont in Crow; however, the technical specifications of that tower are currently unclear.

4. Reports of Subcommittees

Jeramie Middlestead - Big Horn County Sheriff report:

Work is ongoing on the Lodge Grass Substation, located on George Street. Current efforts include concrete work, water connections, and installation of a new power pole. REA will be installing the new power pole. If progress continues as planned, the substation is anticipated to open next month. Jose, representing BIA, will draft a MOU to support audio and video capabilities at the Lodge Grass Substation. In addition, leasing opportunities are being explored in Pryor and Fort Smith for future substation locations. An incident response vehicle has been purchased, with planned use split between evidence collection and search and rescue operations. A request for a donation will be submitted to the FBI to support this effort. Work is also underway on acquiring a trailer.

John Small - Superintendent of Schools

Efforts are underway to obtain blueprints for all schools to support active shooter preparedness. Work is also ongoing to establish active shooter protocols in coordination with the BIA and the Big Horn County Sheriff's Office. Improvements to internet connectivity and communications within school buildings are in progress, and steps are being taken to organize and formalize the protocols. Schools are actively reviewing cellphone usage policies and are awaiting guidance from the Montana Association of School Superintendents.

Sheriff Middlestead reported that approximately 90 percent of school blueprints have been obtained. Efforts continue to encourage schools to release their SOPs, including designated rally points. E3 accounts have been established, allowing schools to communicate during an emergency and to report suspicious activity. The mapping component within the application has been completed, and users are currently being added. Access to the application is controlled; parents and students do not have access.

Sylvan reported that the EOP did not previously include SOPs specific to schools. Work is underway with Orlene to complete and incorporate those SOPs.

Paula Small-Plenty - Big Horn Hospital HR / Emergency Preparedness Director report:

Working on annual requirements: Hazard assessment and exercise plans.

Billie Balckeagle & Chuck Vandersloot - Westmoreland Mine

New to the group. Here to observe the meeting. Sent updated EOP to Jermaie Middlestead. Sylvan will coordinate a date to review the EOP.

Dionne Pretty On Top - Crow/ Northern Cheyenne Safety Officer reports:

The AAR meeting related to the 2024–2025 mold incident is scheduled for Wednesday and will address the six critical functions. Work on the hospital piping project is ongoing, with roof repairs planned as part of the effort. Several hospital departments have been temporarily relocated to accommodate the work. Interested in the ICS 400 class and will need more information from Sylvan.

Glenn Madler - Phillips 66 North Region Field Technician report:

The organization maintains its own safety plan for pipeline operations. The pipeline runs through Pryor, crosses Highway 313, and extends near Fort Smith, continuing through Soap Creek, Sheridan,

and Lodge Grass. In the event of an incident, established procedures are in place for reporting and response. A flagger is deployed every two weeks to inspect the pipeline and survey for any abnormalities. Any issues identified are reported immediately. The EOP has been provided to Sylvan.

Jose Figueroa MM unit & Marcus Moulton COP - BIA reports:

Currently, there are no significant incidents to report from the BIA Crow Agency. The agency is in the process of hiring additional officers to provide increased support. In conjunction with staffing efforts, a MOU is being developed to utilize the BIA Fire Department in Pryor as a temporary substation, particularly during the winter months. This arrangement is intended to maintain building operations and prevent issues such as frozen or broken pipes, as experienced in previous winters, ensuring the facility remains functional ahead of the fire season. Other than these initiatives, operations continue with limited staffing, and efforts are focused on maintaining essential services with the current police personnel.

Albert Mendoza - CISA focus on physical infrastructure report:

CISA provides free, non-regulatory services statewide for all types of critical infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, water/wastewater systems, and houses of worship. Two cybersecurity advisors are based in Helena, but services cover the entire state. CISA assists local agencies by offering training and assessments, including active shooter response, de-escalation, and other preparedness exercises, aiming to support local law enforcement and emergency management. Prioritizing critical infrastructure based on realistic threats, noting that insider threats and active shooter incidents are more likely than large-scale terrorist attacks in Montana. Encourage involving local first responders in assessments to strengthen communication and community resilience. All services by CISA are voluntary, confidential, and free of charge.

Sylvan Covesup - Big Horn County DES Director report:

The ICS 400 class is tentatively scheduled with TEEX for April 22–23, with Sylvan serving as the point of contact and the Fairgrounds being considered as a possible location. Additional information will be distributed once the details are confirmed. The Tribal Liaison will assist with mitigation efforts related to the typhoon, and coordination is currently pending receipt of the mission packet from Alaska. The Commissioners have signed off on the transition to Everbridge, and Code Red will no longer be used as the notification system. Work is underway to create a family emergency kit for distribution. Once the EOP is finalized, it will be shared with the subcommittees.

Alyssa Pitsch - Big Horn County Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator / Admin. Assistant report:

Will attend the Medical Response Surge Exercise at the hospital on February 19, 2026. DWES and CBAT kits have been fully inventoried for the year, and contact information and locations for these kits are available in the Public Health Directory. H5N1 funding is scheduled to end on 1/15. Rapid COVID-19 and influenza tests have been ordered. During the week of December 21–27, 2025, Big Horn County reported a total of 115 influenza cases. The office has received multiple influenza cases this morning, with weekly case counts tracked by Kelsey or Esther. Regarding measles, the state added one new case as of 12/7, bringing the total to 36 cases, including two hospitalizations. Big Horn County continues to report zero measles cases. All PHEP Q2 deliverables have been completed.

5. Hazardous Materials Discussion

Clarification: Looking to create a HazMat Operations Team for Big Horn county. The county Fire

department is working with BNSF for a HazMat awareness training.

6. Unified Health Command & Incident Stress Management

The Unified Health Command is built off of COVID, to continue efforts.

Incident Stress Management: Critical Stress Management out of Bozeman and One Health Counselors have been utilized in the past for traumatic incidents to help out first responders and teachers. Jose suggests: Northern Cheyenne mobile psychiatric unit as a resource.

7. Special Presentations

No Special Presentations.

8. Old Business

Adoption of Bylaws for BHC LEPC:

A motion to adopt, with the addition that regular meetings be held on the first Monday of each month, was made by Jermaie Middlestead and seconded by Paula Small-Plenty. The motion passed unanimously at 2:23 p.m. The bylaws will then be passed to Heather Ready for review, after review the bylaws are then presented to the Commissioners for final approval.

Adoption of Bylaws for BHC LEPC

9. New Business

No New Business.

10. Public Comments

No Public Comments.

11. Details of Next Meeting

Next meeting is set for February 2nd, 2026 at 1:00pm in the Big Horn County Sheriffs office conference room.

12. Adjourn

Sylvan Coversup motioned to adjourn the BHC LEPC meeting; the second was made by John Small. The regular scheduled meeting for the BHC LEPC was adjourned on January 5th, 2026 at 2:28pm.