

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 March 2, 2026 1:00 PM

1. Introductions

The Big Horn County Local Emergency Planning Committee meeting began at 1:11pm on March 2nd, 2026.

Introductions:

LEPC Coordinator: Sylvan Covers Up — BHC DES Director
Tobin Novasio - Superintendent of Hardin School Districts 17H & 1
Travis - Awe Kualawaache Care Center
Chris Curtis — Facility Manager for Yellowtail Dam
AJ Espinoza - Big Horn County Fire Chief / Director of Roads Dept
Alyssa Pitsch - Big Horn County PHEP Coordinator/Admin. Assistant
Stephanie Cliff - Awe Kualawaache Care Center
Suzie L - Awe Kualawaache Care Center
Marina Plainbull - Awe Kualawaache Care Center
Nathan McConnell - City of Hardin Building Inspector / Flood Plain
Dionne Pretty On Top - Crow/Northern Cheyenne IHS Safety Officer
Heather Ready — Big Horn Deputy County Attorney
Kelsey Roebling - Big Horn County Public Health Director / Nurse
Caroline Chavers - Heorot Power Compliance/Safety Support Manager
Samantha Samples - Red Cross Community Disaster Program Manager

Virtual Participation

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87675507310?pwd=P6lBMnrRdcv6C547viwuTVlp1TlBYK.1>

Meeting ID: 876 7550 7310

Passcode: 093437

One tap mobile

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2. Approve Minutes and Supporting Documents

A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Sylvan Coversup and seconded by Alyssa Pitsch. The motion carried at 1:16 p.m.

3. Communications / Mail Slot

No Communications / Mail.

4. Reports of Subcommittees

Sylvan Covers Up - Big Horn County DES Director report:

Received a report of the new Economic Development and Housing Director; will work with her to pursue grant funding for the EOC building. DHS may redirect remaining grant funding, will continue to monitor this. Work on the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is ongoing. Received a report of a diesel leak, initially described as 500 gallons. Investigation revealed it was a minor leak from a dent in the truck that ended up being 500 gallons. This serves as a reminder of the importance of accurate and clear communication to ensure appropriate resource deployment during incidents.

AJ Espinoza - Big Horn County Fire Chief / Director of Roads Dept report:

Working to fight fires, with one in Fort Smith. Would like to have the Hardin Volunteer Fire Dept involved to help with the exercise discussions during future meetings.

Tobin Novasio - Superintendent of Hardin School Districts 17H & 1 report:

Currently developing in-depth active shooter training to take place after the school year ends. No further updates at this time.

Travis - Awe Kualawaache Care Center report:

Our team is updating the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) to incorporate earthquake preparedness and will be working with Sylvan to complete this effort.

Chris Curtis — Facility Manager for Yellowtail Dam report:

Snow pack is currently at 86% for Big Horn and 94% for the entire basin, based on a 30-year average. Precipitation has been low, and runoff this spring is expected to be limited. The reserves are not anticipated to reach full capacity.

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

Working on deliverables and will move the special presentation—the annual review of the transport plan—to the June meeting, as the Sanitarian position remains vacant.

Kelsey Roebling - Big Horn County Public Health Director / Nurse report:

It is still flu season, with 29 cases reported last week—an increase from the previous week. A few hospitalizations due to flu and COVID-19 have been observed, though none are severe. Monitoring continues, and efforts are ongoing to reconcile cases in MIDIS. Family Fun Day is scheduled for May 16, 2026, and all are invited. Additional information about the event will be provided by Chandale.

Nathan McConnell - City of Hardin Building Inspector / Flood Plain report:

Nothing to report at this time.

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

Will begin Hazard Vulnerability Assessments (HVAs) next week at the Lodge Grass, Pryor, and Crow locations. These are all-hazard reviews, which can take up to six hours to complete. A multidisciplinary team will conduct the assessments.

Caroline Chavers - Heorot Power Compliance/Safety Support Manager report:

Nothing to report at this time.

Samantha Samples - American Red Cross Community Disaster Program Manager report:

No updates.

Heather Ready — Big Horn Deputy County Attorney report:

No updates.

5. Hazardous Materials Discussion

Exercise Discussion:

Sylvan Coversup (DES Director / LEPC Coordinator) presented a brief exercise scenario to the LEPC group for discussion. The scenario involved a chemical release at a rail crossing just beyond the T&C warehouse resulting from a derailment. A pickup truck was struck at the crossing, causing two rail cars carrying ammonia to derail and become punctured.

At the time of the incident, winds were reported from the southwest at 6 mph. Residents within a two-block radius reported symptoms of eye irritation. Additionally, the local hospital was already operating at capacity, and the incident occurred shortly before the start of the school day.

Following the presentation, LEPC members collaborated to discuss potential response actions and develop an initial coordinated response.

6. Unified Health Command & Incident Stress Management

Nothing to add.

7. Special Presentations

No special presentations.

8. Old Business

The Public Health annual review of the Transport of Specimens/Samples of Immediate Concern Plan will be moved to the June meeting. Heather Ready reported that the bylaws for the Big Horn County LEPC were presented to the Big Horn County Commissioners for review at the February 26, 2026, meeting. No further action is required at this time. The SRHCC Medical Response Surge Exercise was successfully conducted at the hospital. The Awe Kualawaache Care Center will be coordinating an evacuation drill in the near future.

Public Health Annual Review of: Transport of Specimens/Samples of Immediate Concern Plan

9. New Business

The Commissioners discussed purchasing generators for community centers throughout the county to serve as temporary emergency operation centers. An update on this topic will be provided at the next meeting. Sylvan also plans to present an additional scenario for exercise discussions at the next meeting.

10. Public Comments

No public comments.

11. Details of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Big Horn County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is scheduled for April 6th, 2026, at 1:00 PM in the Big Horn County Sheriff's Office Conference Room.

12. Adjourn

The BHC LEPC meeting was adjourned on March 2nd, 2026, at 2:08 p.m.

