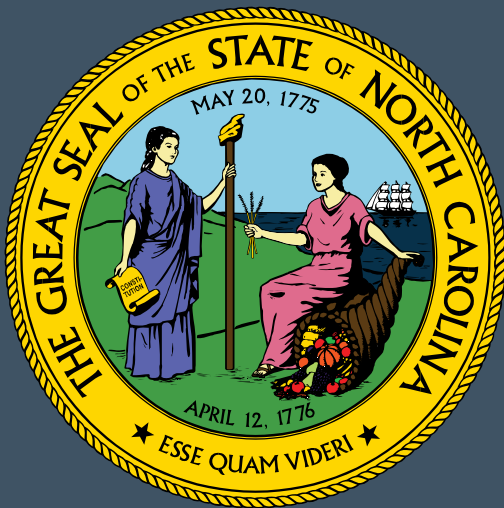


North Carolina

# STATE HOMELAND SECURITY STRATEGY



2025-2028



# A Message From the State Homeland Security Advisor

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS) is charged with protecting the state from a multitude of threats and hazards, to include natural and manmade impacts to our state critical infrastructure and terrorism events. Through our department's operating divisions and agencies, we support local jurisdictions in responding to a variety of incidents and in the implementation of the State Homeland Security Strategy.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have identified 32 core capabilities to build a more resilient and prepared community. The State of North Carolina is committed to supporting the National Preparedness System (NPS) and centers this effort towards building, sustaining, and enhancing these core capabilities. North Carolina's all-hazards approach to proactively identify and re-enforce strengths as well as address identified needs provides foundational support in preparing for, mitigating, responding to and recovering from natural hazard events as well as adversarial man-made events.

As State Homeland Security Advisor, I have the great privilege in leading these efforts and partnering with the Deputy Homeland Security Advisor and Department leadership to protect this great state.

This multi-faceted approach is implemented through collaboration with state and federal public safety, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies through our State Homeland Security Advisor Work Group:

1. Provision of financial support to local and state partners for capability development;
2. Strategic and operational planning and training for critical infrastructure protection;
3. Facilitation of intelligence gathering, analysis, and effective dissemination; and
4. Development of all-hazards response capacity at the local and state level to address a variety of threats.

On behalf of the women and men of the Department of Public Safety, it is my honor to support the daily work to address homeland security threats and risks to our state.

Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr.  
Secretary, Department of Public Safety  
State Homeland Security Advisor

# North Carolina State Homeland Security Strategy

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the North Carolina State Homeland Security Strategy (SHSS) is to provide strategic direction for the State of North Carolina and its jurisdictions to prepare, respond, mitigate, and recover from catastrophic events, both natural and man-made that are identified in North Carolina's Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP). This is especially important due to the high frequency of natural disasters that occur in North Carolina and the potential for future acts of domestic violent extremism, cybercrime, and terrorism. This strategy provides a comprehensive framework for the State of North Carolina which will identify, unify, guide, and streamline homeland security efforts over the next three years.

The SHSS is based on a shared responsibility of preparedness by which working together, across all governmental and private sector landscapes, promotes a safer and more resilient North Carolina in the face of any hazard. It consists of a five-phase approach: Analyze, Develop, Design, Implement and Evaluate, all on a recurring basis. This approach is dependent upon active communication and collaboration among stakeholders from the public and private sector and all levels of government.

To successfully implement this plan, the SHSS focuses on seven goals with associated objectives outlining the direction of the homeland security mission in the state. This is an exceptionally complex task requiring coordination, cooperation, and focused efforts from diverse parties across North Carolina – local, state, and federal government entities, private and non-profit sectors, and the public.

## VISION

The State of North Carolina's vision is to proactively increase capacity and enhance capabilities throughout the state utilizing the whole of community approach that is used to enhance the safety and security of all North Carolinians.

## SCOPE

Homeland security is inherently a multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional effort that focuses on all threats and hazards (technical, human-caused, and natural) that could significantly impact North Carolina. In general, local jurisdictions prepare for their potential threats and hazards, while state agencies must be prepared to assist with catastrophic events that exceed local capability. It is recognized that from the mountains to the coast, North Carolina experiences a dynamic variety of natural disasters at an increased frequency. These include but are not limited to wildfires, ice storms, tornados, mud slides, earthquakes, flooding, tropical storms, and hurricanes. Additionally, the SHSS is significant due to the increased risk of man-made catastrophic events, particularly those that result from a terrorist act, whether physical or cyber in nature.

Effective public-private coordination is critical to the success of homeland security initiatives and is encouraged.

North Carolina's SHSS is based upon the National Preparedness Goal which defines success as: A secure and resilient Nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk (Federal Emergency Management Agency 2020).

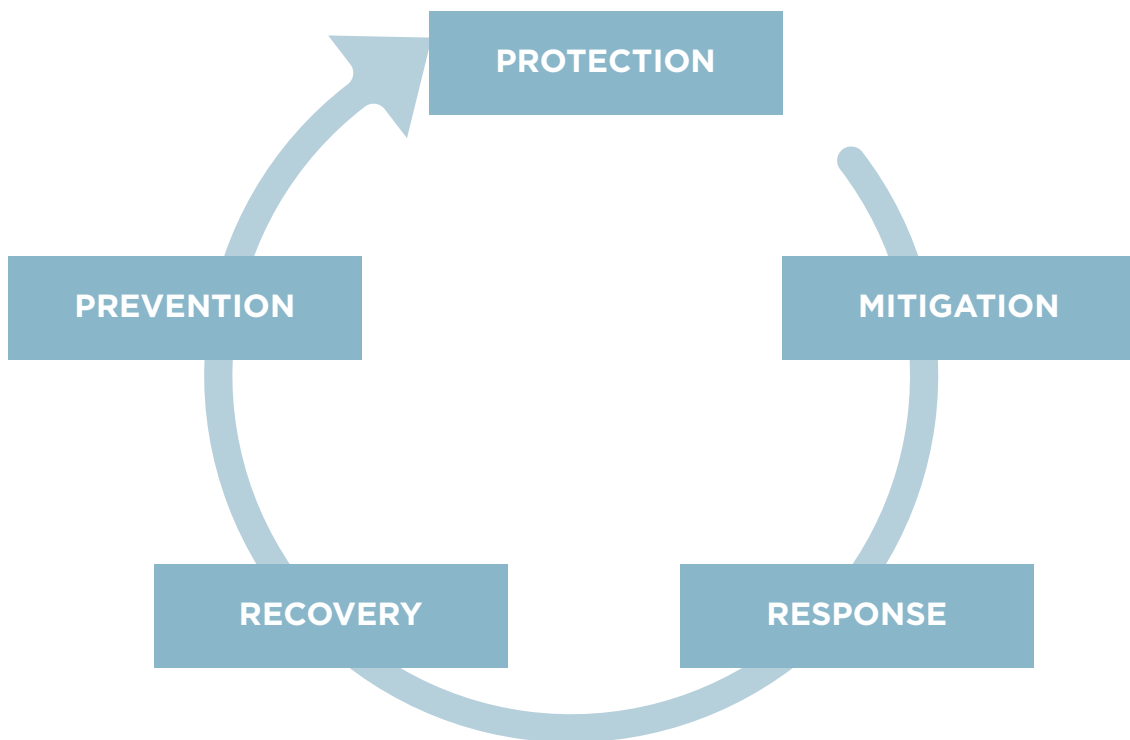
The SHSS utilizes the National Planning Framework as the foundation, along with the following key themes:

1. Engaged Partnership with the Whole Community,
2. Scalability, Flexibility, and Adaptability in Implementation, and
3. Integration Among the Frameworks.

The SHSS rests upon the five mission areas and is guided by the development and execution of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) 32 core capabilities identified in the National Preparedness Goal.

These mission areas are further explained below:

- **Prevention:** Prevent acts of terrorism and other human-caused events through information sharing and counterterrorism investigations and operations.
- **Protection:** Protect the people of North Carolina, critical infrastructure, and key resources using a comprehensive approach.
- **Mitigation:** Reduce the loss of life and property by lessening the impact of future disasters through coordinated mitigation efforts.
- **Response:** Respond quickly to reduce the loss of life and property, reduce suffering, meet basic human needs, and mitigate further harm following an event.
- **Recovery:** Restore essential services in a safe and timely manner after disasters, while also hardening infrastructure and other systems in communities impacted by disasters in order to build them back better than before.



With the understanding that homeland security is a shared responsibility, the SHSS is intended to be a statewide strategy and not exclusive to a single entity or agency. North Carolina will use its vast regional, local, and federal resources to address its unique Planning, Organization, Equipment, Training and Exercise (POETE) needs to implement the state strategy by building and maintaining seven (7) goals and forty-two (42) objectives, critical to meeting the threats and hazards.

The stakeholders that assisted in the revision and updating of the SHSS represent a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines, including law enforcement, fire, EMS, state and local emergency management personnel, volunteer organizations, public health officials, information technology subject matter experts, natural resources officials, critical infrastructure partners, and education representatives. Their input helped to identify issues of significance which affect North Carolina's homeland security efforts.

The State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) plays a significant role in state homeland security efforts as it provides permanent oversight over the State Homeland Security Strategy, policies, and procedures. The SERC has a broad area of responsibility when it comes to the programs it is involved with, to include both oversight of homeland security programs and all hazards preparedness efforts.

# Five-Phase Approach to Identification and Development of North Carolina Homeland Security Priorities

## ANALYZE

The Analyze Phase includes the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and the Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR). This phase includes gathering information from the state level departments and agencies on specific core capabilities for the identified threats and hazards for the THIRA, refinement and development of capability targets / preparedness goals, and the self-assessment for current capabilities for the SPR. North Carolina uses the THIRA to assess risk and set capability targets that reflect attainable preparedness goals, answering three key questions:

- What threats and hazards can affect the community?
- If they occur, what impact would those threats and hazards have on the community?
- Based on those impacts, what capabilities should the community have?

The THIRA/SPR goes beyond evaluating risk, as it also identifies what the North Carolina state agencies and departments need to do to address that risk. By completing the THIRA process, North Carolina state agencies and departments can better understand what they need to prepare for and how to translate that information into action.

## DEVELOP

The Develop Phase includes examining the 32 core capabilities outlined by the 2015 National Preparedness Goal (NPG) and prioritizing those capabilities based off the input of key stakeholders. After development of capability targets that reflect North Carolina's preparedness goals, state departments and agencies then use the SPR to answer the following questions:

- What are the current capabilities?
- What gaps exist between the targets and the capabilities we currently have?
- How can we address our capability gaps and sustain our current capabilities?

The SPR is an outcome-oriented assessment that helps communities intuitively compare their current capabilities with their targets, identify gaps, and prioritize investments and other preparedness activities to address those gaps. North Carolina state agencies and departments quantify the gap between their current capabilities and their targets and then indicate whether that gap is related to any of the five following areas: Planning, Organization, Equipment, Training, and Exercises (POETE).



## DESIGN

The Design Phase includes researching all core capability gaps and comparing them to available funding sources. The design phase includes input from federal, state and local partners. The overarching goal of this phase is to align these efforts and apply them to the State Homeland Security Priorities (objectives). The critical questions answered during this phase are:

- Is there a gap in performance and is the gap a priority?
- Will assigned objectives align with current initiatives such as grant opportunities or partnerships?
- Is there funding?
- Is there an emergent grant opportunity?
- Can partner agencies address or contribute to success?
- Can work be measured quantitatively and/or qualitatively?

## IMPLEMENT

The Implement Phase includes the finalization of the State's Homeland Security Strategy priorities, development of State Homeland Security Grant guidance to reflect those priorities, and execution of various initiatives to address barriers or noted gaps.

North Carolina will implement this strategy through an integrated series of programs, policies, and projects that support the defined goals and objectives. Effective implementation will rest on coordinated planning, investment, and support from the vast contributing agencies and stakeholders involved in homeland security.

## EVALUATE

The Evaluate Phase includes program evaluation in terms of programmatic compliance and monitoring. The major questions answered in this phase include:

- Were identified capability gaps filled?
- Were priority objectives augmented?
- Is there a return on investment (i.e., did the risk decrease)?

Future state and regional THIRA/SPRs will be the evaluative means by which progress is measured. The SPR supports the SHSS by helping to identify preparedness capability gaps.

# Goals

The SHSS contains seven interconnected goals that are designed to accomplish the mission in accordance with the National Preparedness System, National Preparedness Goal, National Preparedness Framework, and other relevant federal guidance.

Each goal contains objectives that further define the initiatives that achieve the State's vision and mission through mission areas. The primary purpose is to establish a proactive and collaborative approach to homeland security that prioritizes information sharing and coordination between partner agencies.

## **NORTH CAROLINA'S HOMELAND SECURITY GOALS:**

**Goal 1:** Strengthen Intelligence and Information Sharing Capabilities

**Goal 2:** Strengthen Counterterrorism Capabilities

**Goal 3:** Enhance Cybersecurity Capabilities

**Goal 4:** Expand Critical Infrastructure Protection

**Goal 5:** Strengthen Public Health and Medical Emergency Preparedness

**Goal 6:** Advance Interoperable and Emergency Communications

**Goal 7:** Strengthen an All-Hazards Preparedness Capability at the Local and State Level

# Initiatives

## **CIVIL DISTURBANCE WORKING GROUP**

The Civil Disturbance Working Group was established by the Department of Public Safety to enhance coordination during the event of civil disturbance. The group is comprised of representatives from various state law enforcement agencies and assists local law enforcement with proactive security measures prior to the onset of an event. Furthermore, during an event, this working group is responsible for making recommendations to the NCDPS Secretary regarding possible state law enforcement actions. All recommendations and decisions are motivated by intelligence and data that is collected, analyzed, and shared by the North Carolina Information Sharing and Analysis Center (NCISAAC) (ISAAC 2024).

## **HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISOR WORKING GROUP**

NCDPS, in collaboration with federal, state and local public safety partners, is charged with protecting the state from a multitude of threats and hazards. These threats and hazards could adversely impact the state's critical infrastructure or could target the general public. The Homeland Security Advisor Working Group is a broad interagency group led by NCDPS and NCEM. The NCDPS Secretary, acting as the Homeland Security Advisor (HSA) and the Director of Emergency Management, acting as the Deputy Homeland Security Advisor (DHSA), provide strategic and operational direction and oversight. The working group enhances critical infrastructure protection, facilitates intelligence gathering, effectively disseminates information, and maintains an all-hazards response capacity at the local, state, and federal levels.

## **TARGETED VIOLENCE & TERRORISM PREVENTION (TVTP) STRATEGY WORKING GROUP**

In an effort to address the crisis of targeted violence and terrorism, a multidisciplinary working group was established to engage in the development of a targeted violence and terrorism prevention strategy. To develop the strategy, NCDPS, in conjunction with NCEM, hosted a State Strategy Workshop to enhance collaboration and communication between community organizations and institutions, public health, and public safety practitioners. This workshop was followed by facilitated training from the Department of Homeland Security's Center for Prevention, Programs, and Partnerships (CP3) with a selected writing team from NCDPS. Following a series of writing sessions, this team outlined a strategy with the goals of proactive integration of state resources and relative partners, to educate and inform, and to increase state Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAMs). This strategy represents a multidimensional public health and public safety approach to addressing targeted violence with a focus on awareness, training, governance/funding, and research/data.

## **JOINT CYBERSECURITY TASK FORCE (JCTF)**

The JCTF is comprised of staff from NCEM, North Carolina Local Government Information Systems Association (NCLGISA), North Carolina National Guard (NCNG), North Carolina Department of Information Technology (NCDIT), NCISAAC, state and federal Information Technology (IT)/Cyber specialists, and local and federal law enforcement partners. This multi-agency team provides proactive services in the form of cybersecurity assessments and penetration testing as well as incident coordination and resource support to state and local organizations impacted by a cyber incident. The joint nature of this group is critical to the effective identification, mitigation, and recovery from cyber threats to North Carolina's critical infrastructure. There were 17 response missions in CY 2024, including 6 ransomware events. The JCTF also conducted 57 assessment and 14 penetration tests. There were nearly 15,000 instances of credential leaks, with the majority coming from the education sector. Over 220 notifications were made regarding critical vulnerabilities found through open-source reporting and the JCTF issued over 70 alerts concerning critical open ports. The JCTF participated in 4 elections missions in 2024, including the 2024 Presidential election.

## **EMERGING ELECTRONICS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

State communications requirements are created and approved by the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) and the NCEM Communications Branch and submitted to the NCEM Homeland Security Section for usage. The communications sector, both public and private, is vital to information sharing in furtherance of protecting the public, as well as public safety professionals. Investing in emerging technology is at the forefront of these efforts with the help of funds generated through available grants. To ensure that interoperability priorities are addressed, the SIEC will provide the State Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP), to outline communications priorities. These priorities are created to align with the THIRA and the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) while keeping security of networks, infrastructure, and personnel in mind.

## **STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMISSION (SERC)**

The SERC is required in each state by the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) of 1986. While the SERC maintains its statutory role of being responsible for implementing the EPCRA provisions and overseeing the Emergency Planning Districts (EPDs) and their respective Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), the SERC has also taken on an "all hazards" approach beyond its original hazardous materials mandate in North Carolina. The NC SERC is briefed annually on the THIRA and SPR. The SERC will review applications for state and regional (i.e. Domestic Preparedness Regions) projects that would be funded with homeland security grant awards. Overall, the SERC has a broad area of responsibility when it comes to the programs it is involved with, to include both oversight of homeland security programs and hazardous materials preparedness efforts.

# Current State Analysis

## TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The NC ISAAC distinguishes between domestic and international terrorism threats. For this assessment, the term Domestic Violent Extremist (DVE) will be used interchangeably with Domestic Terrorist. Domestic terrorism is defined as violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature. International terrorism is defined as a violent, criminal act committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) or nations (state-sponsored).” (ISAAC 2024, 74).

### Analyst Note:

Due to the intersection of anti-Semitism in domestic and international violent extremist ideology, NC recognizes the importance of understanding anti-Semitism within the threat landscape.

The NC ISAAC assesses that antisemitism is a growing concern for North Carolina and likely will persist for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025. Antisemitism refers to prejudice and hatred towards the Jewish community. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), reported incidents of antisemitism increased in North Carolina from 39 incidents in 2022 to 151 incidents in 2023. Additionally, North Carolina registered with the 19th highest number of antisemitic incidents reported in the country for 2023 (ISAAC 2024, 78).

“In 2023, ADL tabulated 8,873 antisemitic incidents across the United States. This represents a 140% increase from the 3,698 incidents recorded in 2022 and is the highest number on record since ADL began tracking antisemitic incidents in 1979. In fact, ADL tracked more incidents in 2023 than in the previous three years combined.” (ADL 2024). Across the United States, ADL saw an increase of over 200% in reported antisemitic incidents from October 7, 2023, to September 24, 2024 compared to reported incidents from the same period the previous year. (ADL 2024).

## **DOMESTIC TERRORISM/DOMESTIC VIOLENT EXTREMISM/COMPOSITE VIOLENT EXTREMISTS**

NC ISAAC assesses that the most prolific threats to North Carolina related to terrorism will come from Composite Violent Extremists (CoVE) and Racially Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVE) actors (ISAAC 2024, 75).

NC ISAAC defines CoVE as “individuals who find justification in the use of force or violence based on personalized extremist narratives that include elements from existing ideological frameworks, grievances, sentiments, and personal fixations” and who “seek to create their own ideologies when they feel their needs and interests are not being fulfilled by a single ideology” (ISAAC 2024, 74).

NC ISAAC continues to state that “Similar to other violent extremists, CoVEs have embraced ‘leaderless resistance’, a concept which encourages self-directed action whereby individuals or small cells operate independently of one another to carry out attacks. Using this model, CoVEs are potentially less vulnerable to disruptions by law enforcement and have more autonomy in their activities and targeting. CoVEs challenge traditional understandings of terrorism and violent extremism as their ideological fluidity complicates their target selections and attack planning. This creates problems in identifying and mitigating potential threats posed by such attackers, as their goals or motives are often indistinguishable compared with other violent extremists like RMVEs” (ISAAC 2024, 75)

According to the Office of Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, “Transnational RMVEs (Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists) continue to pose the most lethal threat to U.S. persons and interests, and a significant threat to a number of U.S. allies and partners through attacks and propaganda that espouses violence” (Intelligence 2023, 33). This assessment is consistent with the National Security Council’s 2021 National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism that states: “Among that wide range of animating ideologies, racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (principally those who promote the superiority of the white race) and militia violent extremists are assessed as presenting the most persistent and lethal threats.” (House 2021).

“While the NC ISAAC assesses that the most prolific threat will come from CoVE and RMVE actors, other violent extremists including Anti-Government/Anti-Authority Violent Extremists (AGAAVEs) are a lesser but still present threat to the state. Moreover, individuals affected by single issues related to abortion, immigration, animal rights, and the environment may be urged to commit violent or criminal acts based upon a variety of ideological, sociopolitical, and personal factors” (ISAAC 2024, 76).

To remain vigilant in detection and disruption of domestic violent extremism and domestic terrorism, North Carolina is dedicated to leveraging open-source information and intelligence, real-time information, and intelligence and data-driven, community informed prevention efforts. North Carolina supports and adopts the four strategic pillars outlined in the National Security Council's June 2021 National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism which reports:

1. Understand and share domestic terrorism-related information
2. Prevent domestic terrorism recruitment and mobilization to violence
3. Disrupt and deter domestic terrorism activity
4. Confront long-term contributors to domestic terrorism

North Carolina is dedicated to addressing these threats with concerted action, coordinated implementation, and careful respect for civil right and civil liberties through information sharing, threat assessments, resources, adequate trainings, and maintaining a dynamic presence adaptable to continually evolving threat landscapes. (House 2021)

## INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

According to NC Statewide Threat Assessment, “The NC ISAAC assesses the threat of FTOs to North Carolina for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025 at roughly even odds. This assessment is made recognizing the ever-present determination among FTOs and their affiliates in attacking the United States, as well as the continued trend by such actors in prioritizing regional adversaries and conflicts and rebuilding overseas networks. (ISAAC 2024, 28, 29). Moreover, the ongoing Israel-HAMAS war in Gaza has galvanized support for the global jihadist movement, prompting FTOs and their affiliates to amplify calls for violence against the United States and Europe. The ISAAC recognizes the evolving nature of FTOs and their affiliate groups, as well as their continued ability to inspire and mobilize Homegrown Violent Extremists (HVEs) in the United States to conduct lone offender attacks” (ISAAC 2024, 77).

Additionally, NC ISAAC highlighted the ramifications of the Israel-HAMAS conflict in the United States.

Following the October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel by HAMAS and the ensuing war, the United States remains in a heightened threat environment. Violent extremists encompassed by anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim views have increased calls for violence online, prompting concerns for threats against the Jewish, Muslim, and Arab-American communities. Nationwide protests involving the war have triggered clashes between pro-Israel and pro-Palestine activists, raising concerns for public safety at mass gatherings and other public events. And lastly, Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) and their affiliates continue to exploit the war and promote violent messaging online thus encouraging HVEs to carry out attacks in the United States.



## CYBER INCIDENTS

Cyber incidents continue to be an increasing concern for critical infrastructure organizations within North Carolina. Every year there have been a noted increase of attacks in the form of ransomware, data exfiltration and extortion, and others which have a devastating impact to North Carolina's critical infrastructure. This trend is forecasted to continue and remain a pervasive occurrence in the upcoming years. NC acknowledges that ransomware will continue to be a persistent issue, along with specialization such as initial access brokers and even Ransomware as a Service (RaaS) offerings for the less tech-inclined or socially awkward would-be criminal to benefit from complex attacks with minimal expertise of their own.

According to the NCISAAC 2024 Statewide Threat Assessment, "Cyber criminals, particularly initial access brokers and ransomware gangs, are the most immediate threat to North Carolina due to their numerous intrusions within state, local, private, and non-profit organizations across the country and their intent to cause harm to the US" (ISAAC 2024, 31). NCISAAC also mentions that Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs) from foreign adversaries are a threat to North Carolina. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has demonstrated that it has the capability to compromise common hardware and software utilized by North Carolina critical infrastructure entities as well as directly target private and public organizations (ISAAC 2024, 31). Russian and other adversarial APTs have not demonstrated the same level of sophistication and number of cyber intrusions within the US as China. Additionally, "the risk for cyber-attacks in North Carolina is high due to the numerous and increasing Threat Actors (TA) globally, the lowered skills required to conduct an attack, vulnerabilities in IT, and human error" (ISAAC 2024).

North Carolina recognizes that the potential for a cybersecurity incident exists at any given time and that a cybersecurity incident can produce cascading impacts that adversely affect the delivery of essential goods and services, harm the economy, degrade public services, and other adverse outcomes. Cybersecurity incidents could also be a part of a complex attack involving physical attacks or other malicious activity.

With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), North Carolina has been aware of its potential impacts. AI has the potential to not only help cyber defenders (analyzing potential threats, actions of programs and network usage to both flag and respond to potentially malicious activities faster than a human could) but also assist threat actors develop more sophisticated attacks (craft more believable phishing emails or credential harvesting web sites, alter/impersonate voices, generate polymorphic malware that can adapt itself to avoid traditional (signature-based) detection methods, and create ways to exploit known and zero-day vulnerabilities in seconds). By leveraging AI, a TA could automate target selection, identify vulnerabilities, and bypass defenses. Using machine learning algorithms, a network's traffic patterns could be analyzed to maximize success in terms of the best time and method of deploying malware. Additionally, the use of AI is making the propagation of mis/dis/mal information related to all hazards events more difficult to control.

North Carolina acknowledges the majority of critical infrastructure are subject to cybersecurity incidents and that information systems in the private and public sector are routinely probed and attacked on a continuous basis by a variety of known and unknown actors. A method North Carolina has adopted to help reduce the risk to citizen-facing services and sensitive data is to report cyber incidents as they occur. In doing so, North Carolina will be able to provide subject matter experts, resources and assistance in various forms that range from consultation and guidance to deployment of the JCTF to assist as needed.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICAL EMERGENCIES**

North Carolina's public health and medical programs are designed to enhance and support public health capacities prior to, during, and after a disaster occurs. North Carolina will also prepare for the outbreak of communicable diseases and other public health related emergencies.

## **FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL EMERGENCIES**

The agricultural industry, including food, fiber, and forestry, contributes approximately \$111.1 billion to North Carolina's economy and accounts for a significant percentage of the State's total income. Interruption during any stage of agricultural operations can have devastating and far-reaching impacts on public health and the economy. Identifying the major threats to the food and agriculture sector is an integral component of being able to prepare for, respond to and recover from incidents involving this critical national infrastructure component.

There are many threats to agriculture including but not limited to: food contamination and supply disruptions, crop and animal disease and pests, and natural disasters. These threats could be intentional (agro-terrorism), accidental or naturally occurring events.

Food supply disruptions can have tremendous implications to the well-being of NC citizens. Threats to transportation or delivery systems, the ability to employ farm or food processing workers and loss of raw materials can devastate the ability to provide the nation with food and fiber products. One such example is the absence of workers at food facilities due to pandemic illness, creating a loss of production and higher food prices.

The introduction of a Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) such as Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian Influenza, or African Swine Fever would have devastating impacts due to the loss of livestock, food production, and international trade. Invasive pests can also cause significant damage to the crop and forestry portion of agriculture with examples including sweet potato root knot nematodes, the emerald ash borer, the spotted lantern fly, and the European gypsy moth.

Natural disasters (hurricanes, flooding, drought, tornadoes, wildfires, etc.) have proven over the years to have significant negative impacts on all aspects of NC agriculture. Direct loss or damage to farm or food-supply infrastructure, along with mass crops or animal losses due to flooding, can create significant public health and safety concerns. Indirect impacts such as loss of critical power supply to animal barns or food processing facilities are common occurrences in natural disasters that can also have substantial repercussions to the agriculture industry.

## **NATURAL HAZARD EMERGENCIES**

### **HURRICANES**

Due to its geographic position, North Carolina can experience both direct and indirect impacts from tropical cyclones. There are several paths that a hurricane may take, all of which result in varying effects to North Carolina. A coastal track (where the hurricane skirts the coastline) typically results in a threat of heavy rain, high winds, and storm surge across portions of central and eastern North Carolina. A gulf track (when a hurricane makes landfall on the Gulf Coast and moves northward) often brings heavy rains and flooding to the western portion of the state. A direct landfall can cause statewide damage from heavy rain, high winds and storm surge and often results in the most widespread impacts.

According to NOAA's Hurricane Research Division, 60 hurricanes and 55 tropical storms have made landfall or affected North Carolina from 1851-2023. The most recent tropical cyclone to have damaging effects was Helene in September 2024 which impacted western NC North Carolina is one of the most hurricane prone states in the country.

### **FLOODS**

Floods can occur at any time of the year across the state and are among the most common and impactful natural disasters. North Carolina's proximity to the moisture sources of the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, and western North Carolina's mountainous terrain have led to extreme rainfall events in all corners of the state. Along with flash flooding, extreme rainfall can lead to landslides and debris flows across western portions of the state. A record 244 Flash Flood Warnings were issued in North Carolina by the National Weather Service in 2018. North Carolina has 17 major river basins which can result in river flooding impacting the state for days and weeks after heavy rainfall ends. Severe river flooding can result in communities being cutoff for long durations.

### **WINTER STORMS**

During winter weather events, North Carolina can experience all different precipitation types. The mountain region is often more prone to winter weather than any other region in the state. In this region, snow is typically the most dominant precipitation type and higher elevations can see 50-75" of snowfall per season. Heavy snow, sleet, and/or significant ice accumulation can lead to widespread transportation impacts and significant damage to trees, power lines, and infrastructure.

Wintry precipitation is not the only hazard that a winter storm can bring to the state. During Nor'easters, strong winds occur along the coastline and contribute to coastal flooding.

## **WILDFIRES**

North Carolina averages thousands of fires every year, with tens of thousands of acres burned. In 2016, over 77,000 acres were burned in North Carolina, largely due to several large fires across western portions of the state after a warm and dry summer and fall season. From fiscal years 2015-2024, 270,859 acres of woodlands burned in North Carolina with 2016 and 2023 reporting the largest acres burned at 79,674 acres and 69,690 acres respectively. Lead causes are often human related as with FY 2024 where 99% of wildfires were started by human activity.

## **DROUGHTS**

Historically, North Carolina experiences drought conditions every few years with a significant drought occurring every 10-20 years. Significant droughts can lead to reduced drinking water supplies, agricultural impacts, increased wildfire risks, and poor water quality. Long-term droughts can significantly impact state revenue by harming the economy through low crop yields, increased food costs, increased water costs, and reduced tourism. The North Carolina Drought Management Advisory Council (DMAC) was created in 2003 under North Carolina General Statute 143.355.1. The DMAC is an interagency organization responsible for issuing drought advisories based on technical data to address varying conditions throughout the state.

## **EARTHQUAKES**

North Carolina can experience earthquakes centered within the state, but also from earthquakes centered outside in five seismic zones: Eastern Tennessee, South Carolina, and New Madrid. While earthquakes can be felt across all of North Carolina, the greatest threat is in western North Carolina, and along the North Carolina/South Carolina state line in southeastern North Carolina. Often, those of magnitude 3.5 or higher can be felt by many. Eight earthquakes of that magnitude or higher have been recorded. The most recent being August 9, 2020, when a 5.1 magnitude earthquake struck Sparta, NC. The 1886 earthquake centered in Charleston, South Carolina is the most damaging earthquake recorded in the southeast and brought strong to very strong shaking throughout southern and central North Carolina.

## **SEVERE WEATHER**

Severe storms including tornadoes, damaging winds, and hail can occur across the entire state and during any month, with the greatest activity during April and May. According to the NC State Climate Office, the state has experienced 293 tornadoes and thousands of reports of high wind and hail from 2014-2023. Since 1980, 54 severe storm events have resulted in 5-10 billion dollars in damages per NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information.

## **RISK ANALYSIS (THIRA/SPR)**

In pursuant to Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 201, North Carolina utilizes the THIRA to better understand the State's risks and hazards and determine the level of capability needed to address those risks and hazards on a yearly basis. During the THIRA process, targets are set for each of the 32 capabilities in the National Preparedness Goal. North Carolina then uses the SPR to estimate the State's current capabilities, identify capability gaps and intended approaches for addressing gaps, and assess the impact of relevant funding sources on sustaining and building capabilities. The threats and hazards identified in the 2023 THIRA were selected from information gathered from Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) based on the State's most likely scenarios.

The THIRA/SPR are the result of a collaborative effort by North Carolina Emergency Management and subject matter experts from a multitude of disciplines across the state representing federal, state, tribal, local, private sector and non-governmental partners. While the specific results of the THIRA/SPR are not made public to protect any sensitive information contained within the data, the general sense of North Carolina's strengths and needs have been captured and are incorporated into this SHSS. Together, the THIRA, SPR and SHSS will continue to be used to help determine how federal homeland security grant funding can be leveraged toward the most critical needs faced by the state.

## **MAINTENANCE AND REVISIONS**

This plan will be reviewed every three years and updated as needed, or as conditions warrant. Review and update of the SHSS will be led by the NCEM Homeland Security Section and coordinated with internal and external stakeholders as needed. Once the review is complete, the NCEM Chief of Staff and Director will review and approve the plan. This document should remain internal to NCEM unless otherwise requested.





# **GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION SHARING CAPABILITIES**



# Goal 1: Strengthen Intelligence and Information Sharing Capabilities

## Mission Areas: Prevention, Protection

### Objectives

- 1.1) Ensure intelligence and information reporting is generated by external partner organizations through the Field Liaison Officer (FLO) program.
- 1.2) Conduct analysis and information dissemination processes and products to better support stakeholders.
- 1.3) Support NC public safety officials' professional development concerning threat areas of interest.
- 1.4) Maintain and leverage information technology systems, platforms, etc. to support analysis and information sharing.
- 1.5) Enhance coordination, information sharing and outreach between the NCISAAC and Joint Cybersecurity Task Force (JCTF) with a vision of co-locating the JCTF with NCISAAC.
- 1.6) Increase the participation of local and state emergency management personnel in the NCISAAC Field Liaison Officer (FLO) Program.



## **GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN COUNTERTERRORISM CAPABILITIES**

## Goal 2: Strengthen Counterterrorism Capabilities

### Mission Areas: Prevention, Protection and Response

#### **Objectives**

- 2.1) Increase the ability to identify, respond, investigate, and/or disrupt threat items that have a nexus to terrorism.
- 2.2) Development of investigative and analytical processes that address targeted violence incidents.
- 2.3) Continue support for the State's bomb squad and explosive detection canine teams to further enhance the Improvised Explosive Device prevention and response teams.
- 2.4) Increase the ability to identify, respond, investigate, and/or disrupt threat items that have a nexus to illicit drug and narcotic trafficking and distribution.
- 2.5) Increase the ability to identify, respond, investigate, and/or disrupt threat items that have a nexus to Organized Criminal Enterprises.



## **GOAL 3: ENHANCE CYBERSECURITY CAPABILITIES**

## Goal 3: Enhance Cybersecurity Capabilities

### Mission Areas: Protection

#### **Objectives**

- 3.1) Through the collaborations of NCEM, NCDIT, NCNG, NCLGISA and other relevant partners integrate and operationalize cybersecurity tools across all state agencies.
- 3.2) Continue to be the model state for cybersecurity by integrating intelligence and information sharing capabilities across the state spectrum. (SEE Goal 1: Objective 1.5)
- 3.3) Harden networking infrastructure by reforming outdated infrastructure and putting in place new technologies that greatly improve security within state and local government agencies.
- 3.4) Cultivate IT workforce.
- 3.5) Improve state, local, and critical infrastructure cybersecurity technical capabilities.
- 3.6) Identify state, local and private Critical Infrastructure/Key Resource (CIKR) agencies who rely on Operational Technology (OT) to provide services.
- 3.7) Improve cyber incident response and the ability to analyze cyber related incidents and perform necessary investigations.
- 3.8) Improve cybersecurity awareness through outreach and education efforts to pertinent stakeholders.
- 3.9) Increase awareness of Artificial Intelligence's (AI) potential benefits and risks for state and local agencies.



## **GOAL 4: EXPAND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION**

## Goal 4: Expand Critical Infrastructure Protection

### Mission Areas: Response, Recovery

#### **Objectives**

- 4.1) Expand and refine the Critical Infrastructure Protection Program.
- 4.2) Improve the Security and Resiliency of State Energy Sector Assets.
- 4.3) Strengthen Public and Private Sector Partnerships.
- 4.4) Improve the security and resiliency of state transportation sector assets.
- 4.5) Initiate processes, in collaboration with U.S. DHS/Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), to conduct vulnerability assessments for NC critical infrastructure sectors.
- 4.6) Improve outreach and coordination efforts for all-hazards school risk management and emergency response.



**GOAL 5: STRENGTHEN  
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS**



## Goal 5: Strengthen Public Health Emergency Preparedness

### Mission Areas: Response, Recovery

#### **Objectives**

- 5.1) Support public health surveillance capabilities to more effectively prevent and monitor outbreaks of disease and exposures.
- 5.2) Enhance local, regional, state, and federal cross-disciplinary planning efforts to prepare for and respond to a health emergency.
- 5.3) Enhance statewide mass fatality management capabilities.
- 5.4) Expand public health emergency preparedness through training and exercise efforts across the state.
- 5.5) Ensure public health preparedness.



**GOAL 6: ADVANCE  
INTEROPERABLE AND  
EMERGENCY  
COMMUNICATIONS**

# Goal 6: Advance Interoperable and Emergency Communications

## Mission Areas: Response

### **Objectives**

- 6.1) Maintain the Strategic Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP).
- 6.2) Develop purchasing standards to align communications technologies with current statewide communications plan, systems, networks, strategies, and emerging technologies in furtherance of obtaining federal grants. This shall include system and device security.
- 6.3) Increase capabilities of the NCEM 24 Hour Watch thru the adoption of data sharing processes.
- 6.4) Conduct multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary communications training and exercises to evaluate emergency and interoperable communications.
- 6.5) Develop and enhance redundant communications capabilities.
- 6.6) Increase awareness of radio encryption capabilities to law enforcement partners.
- 6.7) Provide legislative awareness of threats to public safety communications infrastructure to keep pace with adversarial activities.
- 6.8) Optimize outdated voice and data communications equipment.
- 6.9) Support Continuity of Government (COG) communications priorities to support executive level officials and non-traditional practitioners.



**GOAL 7: STRENGTHEN  
AN ALL-HAZARDS  
PREPAREDNESS CAPABILITY AT  
THE LOCAL AND STATE LEVEL**

## Goal 7: Strengthen an All-Hazards Preparedness Capability at the Local and State Level

### Mission Areas: Response, Recovery, Mitigation

#### **Objectives**

- 7.1) Work with state and local emergency preparedness stakeholders to develop and maintain a wide variety of preparedness and response plans.
- 7.2) Enhance coordination, planning, and communication.
- 7.3) Coordinate with state and local public safety partners in developing a proactive event security planning model.
- 7.4) Enhance outreach and utilization of the Threat and Hazard Identification Risk assessment tool at the local level and integrate with the FEMA Unified Reporting tool.
- 7.5) Enhance the outreach to local entities to increase participation in the Special Event Assessment Rating process.

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# CYBER SECURITY



