

Emergency Management Symbols History – Meaning – Relevance

A Commentary to the Symbol introduced by NEMA as the New National Logo for Emergency Management by Gunnar J Kuepper

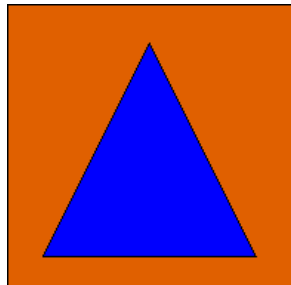
On November 30, 2006, the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), a private group of state emergency management directors, introduced a logo intended to serve as a new national symbol for emergency management. Present at the press conference in Washington D.C. were FEMA Director David Paulison, DHS Undersecretary for Preparedness George Foresman, representatives from NEMA, and IAEM President 2006-2007 Mike Selves.

IAEM headquarters announced endorsement for the new symbol that has neither been introduced to IAEM members nor approved by the IAEM board. IAEM was also not involved in the design or creation of the logo.

Therefore, the following lines are to be considered a critical opinion statement of the author.



or



versus



According to a NEMA press release: *“the new icon replaces the old civil defense symbol, a relic from the Cold War. The old civil defense symbols were used in public service campaigns for the same reason the new symbol is being introduced: to inspire people to become more involved in their own protection and preparedness.”*

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1. NEMA Corporate Style

A simple examination of the New Logo



reveals that it is indisputable part of the corporate identity of NEMA.



NEMA Logo



EMAC



EMAP

administered by NEMA

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2. Exclusion of large parts of Organizations and Groups involved in Emergency Management.

The NEMA press release from November 30, 2006 states: *“The new icon will be used by local, state and Federal agencies to draw attention to information that is vital to Americans’ preparedness”* and *“It will also serve to remind people that Emergency Management is a true profession to which thousands of **public** servants have devoted their careers.”*

The press release continues *“the three stars represent local, state, and federal governments.”*

Therefore the 563 federally recognized tribal governments (sovereign nations) in the United States, representing around 2.8 million Native Americans seem also not to be included.

Combined with the slogan *“Public Safety, Public Trust”* the logo appears to be geared exclusively towards public sector institutions.

Unfortunately it excludes a very large part of the society and IAEM members involved in

- ? the private sector,
- ? volunteer organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army as well as
- ? faith-based and church groups that have been involved in disaster preparedness, response, and relief for 150 years and longer,
- ? tribal governments and emergency services,
- ? individual citizens involved in local emergency preparedness,
- ? business and industry,
- ? private sponsors and donors,
- ? research centers and educational institutions outside the government (i.e., University of Southern California)

in other words,

- ? a large contingent of the IAEM membership.

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3. Recognition

The new logo is unfamiliar and not easily identifiable as being associated with the field of Emergency Management / Civil Defense. Most Fire service symbols contain the Maltese Cross in one way or another, law enforcement uses the symbol of the “Sheriff Star” or the “Police Shield”, and EMS the “Star of Life”.



All these symbols are simple and easily recognized throughout the world. In addition, there is also an internationally recognized symbol for Disaster Management activities. It is the “old” triangle used in Civil Defense and still used today in the US,



and, through its simplicity recognized by large parts of the population. It is also used in the vast majority of nations throughout the world. The blue triangle on an orange background is the official symbol for Emergency Management/Civil Defense agencies in most member countries of the European Union.

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3.1 International Protection

More important, the 1977 Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Convention provided in Article 66 that the international distinctive sign of civil defence is an equilateral blue triangle on an orange ground. The "Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts" adopted in December 1977, includes not only the use of the Red Cross and related flags but also other use of flags in wartime. In particular, it provides for two additional flags of protection, including one for civil defense installations and units.

Article 66 provides that the international distinctive sign of civil defence is an equilateral blue triangle on an orange ground when used for the protection of civil defence organizations, their personnel, buildings and material and for civilian shelters. An annex to the Protocol "recommends" that if the blue triangle is on a flag, the ground to the triangle be the orange flag, one of the angles of the triangle be pointed vertically upwards, and no angle of the triangle touch the edge of the orange ground.

Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1)

adopted on 8 June 1977 by the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law applicable in Armed Conflicts, entry into force 7 December 1979, in accordance with Article 95 Article 66-Identification

- 1. Each Party to the conflict shall endeavour to ensure that its civil defence organizations, their personnel, buildings and material are identifiable while they are exclusively devoted to the performance of civil defence tasks. Shelters provided for the civilian population should be similarly identifiable.*
- 2. Each Party to the conflict shall also endeavour to adopt and implement methods and procedures which will make it possible to recognize civilian shelters as well as civil defence personnel, buildings and material on which the international distinctive sign of civil defence is displayed.*
- 3. In occupied territories and in areas where fighting is taking place or is likely to take place, civilian civil defence personnel should be recognizable by the international distinctive sign of civil defence and by an identity and certifying their status.*
- 4. The international distinctive sign of civil defence is an equilateral blue triangle on an orange ground when used for the protection of civil defence organizations, their personnel, buildings and material and for civilian shelters.*
- 5. In addition to the distinctive sign, Parties to the conflict may agree upon the use of distinctive signals for civil defence identification purposes.*

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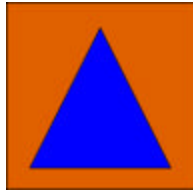
6. The application of the provisions of paragraphs 1 to 4 is governed by Chapter V of Annex I to this Protocol.

7. In time of peace, the sign described in paragraph 4 may, with the consent of the competent national authorities, be used for civil defence identification purposes.

8. The High Contracting Parties and the Parties to the conflict shall take the measures necessary to supervise the display of the international distinctive sign of civil defence and to prevent and repress any misuse thereof.

9. The identification of civil defence medical and religious personnel, medical units and medical transports is also governed by Article 18.

protected under the Geneva Convention



used by the International Community



Bulgaria



Ireland



Panama



Spain



Singapore

For a multi-cultural and multi-language society like the United States, the new logo created by NEMA and the letters “EM” are confusing, particularly without the Civil Defense logo. The terms “Civil Defense” or “Civil Protection” and their meaning are known throughout most of the world. Emergency Management, however, is a term used mainly in the United States, and its meaning is still unknown to large parts of the general population.

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4. Conclusion

The author does not see any need for or common sense in endorsing the new logo. It is designed by a private organization representing only 50 state emergency management directors and was created without the input or consultation of large institutions involved in Emergency Management. The traditional Civil Defense Logo is known to a wide variety of the US population,



and throughout the entire world.

The modern –and rather complicated- design of the NEMA Emergency Management Logo will not be understood and recognized by the general public. The key requirement of “Crisis Communication” is simplicity. Icons like the Red Cross, the Maltese Cross, the Star of Life, and the “Old” or traditional Civil Defense Logo provide this much-needed recognition.

The author sees the need to overhaul or redesign the “old” Civil Defense Logo.

However, the NEMA-Logo as a government-only symbol, excluding a large, if not the largest part of the disaster response, preparedness, and recovery community in the US and the world, is not appropriate to serve as symbol for our nation.

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5. Organizations Involved



National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)

NEMA is a non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) professional association of and for state emergency management directors. It was founded in 1974. NEMA's mission is to: Provide national leadership and expertise in comprehensive emergency management; Serve as a vital emergency management information and assistance resource; and Advance continuous improvement in emergency management through strategic partnerships, innovative programs, and collaborative policy positions. In 1990 NEMA became an affiliate organization with The Council of State Governments (CSG). Annual membership fees for State Directors are US \$ 3,200.

www.nemaweb.org



International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)

IAEM is a non-profit organization consisting of nearly 3,000 emergency management professionals from governmental institutions, private industry, military, academia, and volunteer organizations. IAEM was founded in 1952 as the US Civil Defense Council. Currently more than 150 professionals from Canada and additional 250 professionals from more than 30 nations have joined IAEM. The 2006-2007 President is Mike Selves from Johnson County in Kansas.

www.iaem.com



FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed Executive Order 12148 which put a new agency, FEMA, in charge of coordinating all disaster relief efforts at the federal level. FEMA absorbed the Federal Insurance Administration, the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration, the National Weather Service Community Preparedness Program, the Federal Preparedness Agency of the General Services Administration and the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration activities from HUD. FEMA was also given the responsibility for overseeing the nation's Civil Defense, a function which had previously been performed by the Department of Defense's Defense Civil Preparedness Agency.

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In 1993, President Bill Clinton elevated FEMA to a cabinet level position and named James Lee Witt as FEMA Director. Witt initiated reforms that would help to streamline the disaster recovery and mitigation process.

FEMA was absorbed into the new Department of Homeland Security as of 2003, and became part of the DHS' Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of DHS.

Since May of 2006 R. David Paulison heads FEMA as the Undersecretary for Federal Emergency Management within the Department of Homeland Security.

www.fema.gov



US Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is a Cabinet department of the Federal Government of the United States with the responsibility of protecting the territory of the United States from terrorist attacks and responding to natural disasters.

www.dhs.gov

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Comments from Emergency Management Professionals in IAEM Region 9

Endorsement NO:

“IAEM Region IX should NOT endorse that logo. The logo should consist of the CD triangle with EM instead of CD as the letters.”

US military

“Go get ‘em, Gunnar. I think the new logo really sucks.”

private sector

“IAEM Region IX should NOT endorse that logo. I agree with you 100% and would like to see a logo that is all inclusive and better designed. Possibly, something that incorporates the past as well as embraces our future roll in all four phases of emergency management.”

private sector, utilities

“I agree that a new and better EM logo should be considered. I also agree that Region IX and IAEM general membership, or at least the IAEM Board of Directors, should have opportunity for input concerning "approval" of the design.

In this day of "corporate identity branding," the NEMA-oriented design is attractive and would look nice on a business card or letterhead. However, it does nothing to instill instant recognition or functional identity for emergency managers or people in the career field as did the old CD emblem - - which still shouts "civil defense emergency responder" when seen anywhere, anytime (at least by people over 30 years of age).

Your pictures of various international emergency management-civil defense emblems was enlightening. I support concept of a "standardized emblem" for use by emergency managers as a logo. Even a blending of the NEMA stars with the IAEM "Twister" logos would better communicate what we do for a living. A "fourth star" recognizing private industry partners might aid in conveying who and what we are as a profession today.”

“I do NOT endorse the proposed logo. It looks like it belongs on a bowling ball...”

local government

“I'm glad to see you took the lead on this subject. I wasn't even aware that this item was up for consideration. We have to at least keep the triangle shape in our logo. Even the Air Force changed their titles from Disaster Preparedness to Emergency Managers and came up with a logo change. They kept the triangle in their new logo. I've included both the new and the old logo. IAEM Region IX should NOT endorse that logo.”

US military

“IAEM Region IX should NOT endorse that logo. Your explanation and concerns are valid. The field includes the groups you listed and there should be inclusion in decision making, including the logo conception, buy in and presentation. While I think it is important to get the message out to all and to have a recognizable logo - I believe in the

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democratic process. I look forward to consensus on a logo and inclusive symbolism. Thank you for representing us.”

local government

“SHOULD NOT endorse. I favor a design based on the widely used blue triangle on orange background.”

private sector

“I too was confused by the announcement, particularly since having David Paulison present implied an endorsement by FEMA. I don’t see it as an obvious representation of the discipline, and would vote to not endorse it.”

federal government

“I cannot endorse the new logo. Simply put, it does not represent us”.

local government

“While I do believe that the old or traditional Civil Defense symbol needs a “facelift” or complete redesign, I don’t care for several aspects of the new logo. As you said, something like this should have been discussed with the membership or BOD for IAEM. I did not realize that this was not the case. Since I was not able to attend the conference last month, I assumed that it was something that was discussed at the conference so I took it for face value.

After you have pointed out the similarities, I do see a “conflict of interest” or heavy influence from the NEMA and would hope that in this world of sports arena and stadium endorsements that we wouldn’t see something like that come from the federal government.

Please let me share with you the LARGEST problem that I have with the description of and symbolism of the new logo – the three stars representing “Local, State, and Federal Governments”. As you pointed out, a large contingency is not represented with the private sector, non-profits, faith-based, etc. However, once again, a recognized government that is not included and not respected is the sovereign tribal governments. Tribal governments are not local units of government (even though the Stafford Act defines them as such, the Stafford Act is incorrect in this manner) and are unique in their own right.

I really would like to “dive” further into this matter but unfortunately, time is pressing right now. I will try to include more thoughts, comments, and concerns at a later time. In the meantime, I did “carbon copy” Tim Sanders, the current Tribal Affairs Committee Chair on this e-mail so that he is aware as well. I will speak to Tim to see if the committee would like to have stance on this issue as well.

Please, always remember and be considerate of the tribes – and ensure that others in your area are doing the same.”

tribal government

*“IAEM Region IX **should NOT** endorse that logo. It appears this group does not consider the private sector as a viable part of emergency management, but yet who rose to the*

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occasion when Katrina hit? What would FEMA had done if Wal-Mart hadn't sent in their trucks to meet the communities needs?"

private sector

"Neither IAEM nor IAEM Region IX should endorse the NEMA logo"

local government

Endorsement YES:

"I love your passion and understand your concerns. The logo is an improvement but its evolution should have involved input from the industry and IAEM but it did not. I would rather see effort put into creating a more cooperative/sharing spirit than fighting over a logo. Don't waste your time fighting over a logo that will not be changed.

Get the logo creators to agree to work with IAEM on how to use and market the logo. I do like the slogan.

Recruit Amer Red Cross and others to participate in the marketing of the logo with IAEM. PSA's. brochures etc."

local government

"OF COURSE, the IAEM board should endorse the logo. I know you have a lock on what goes out to the rest of Region 9, and we aren't going to be able to argue this openly. Your displeasure with this logo (as expressed in your email) is going to taint what information is going to be discussed. In all due respect, if you wanted an unbiased opinion, your argument should have been less one-sided.

1) *NEMA isn't a closed organization; of course IAEM knew about this before it happened.*

2) *If the problem is that IAEM leadership didn't inform the board – that is one of those internal political problems that I have been ranting about for the past two years and that isn't going to change until the IAEM leadership structure changes.*

3) *Having the leadership take action without telling the board or the membership just isn't uncommon. They do it all the time.*

Now, having said that:

4) *Creating a logo or symbol with the kind of consensus you are suggesting would take years – especially given how scattered this field actually is and how hard it is to actually define what emergency management is.*

5) *If NEMA wants to step forward and provide some leadership by defining this much of it – at least somebody is!!*

6) *I haven't seen any of those other organizations you feel are excluded stepping up to provide any kind of cohesive leadership in this area.*

7) *THE LAST THING I WANT TO SEE is the old Civil Defense concepts reinstated. We have enough trouble now trying to define ourselves as broader than Homeland Security.*

Finally:

8) *I like it. It is clean. It is the kind of logo that can be adopted and adapted.*

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9) *If there is a problem defining the three stars as “state/local/federal”, lets call them something else. How about “public/private/NFP”? It is all in how you look at it.”*
state government, education

No Opinion:

“I know I am a new member to Region IX but my thoughts are:

- 1) The old Civil Defense logo needs to be retired*
 - 2) It would have been much better if IAEM had vetted consideration of the new logo with the membership*
 - 3) The process is too far along to stop it now*
 - 4) For a variety of reasons, I am not sure it is the issue that Region IX wants to take on at this time*
 - 5) Can we work with IEAM to insure, that as part of the promotional campaign, there is an equal focus on our partners in the private sector including NGOs, faith based groups, business and industry, etc.?*
- Thanks for listening.”*

local government

“I have no opinion on this matter. It really doesn't matter to me”.

local government

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About the Author:

Gunnar J Kuepper is Chief of Operations with Emergency & Disaster Management in Los Angeles, California. This independent firm advises private sector, non-profit organizations, and governmental institutions throughout the world in emergency management programs and conducts comprehensive vulnerability studies. He has analyzed, lectured, and published his findings of the response operations in many catastrophic incidents, ranging from passenger transportation accidents, to fires and explosions, to acts of terrorism and ultraviolence. He is involved in a variety of charitable disaster management efforts and has had the honor to serve on the IAEM board since 1999, proudly representing 300 emergency management professionals in the Southwestern United States.

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