

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

After 25 years, County Emergency Manager Paul Kunnemann says it's time for some new blood in the position.

At the Oct. 22 Chase County Commissioners' meeting, Kunnemann submitted a letter indicating his plans to step down from the job on Jan. 1, 2014.

An advertisement seeking a full-time County Emergency Manager began running in last week's newspaper. Interested applicants are to submit resumes by Nov. 5.

According to meeting minutes, the commissioners plan to hold a special meeting next Thursday, Nov. 7, to begin interviews.

Kunnemann, 70, said health issues played a part in his decision to step down.

"I hate to leave the job, but it's also time for some younger blood," he said.

Kunnemann, who started in the position in 1988 as County Civil Defense Director, said job responsibilities changed tremendously after 9/11. The position name was changed to County Emergency Manager before 9/11, he said.

Now, he works a lot with agencies such as the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as well as Homeland Security.

Back when he started, local emergencies and weather-spotting were the areas that comprised much of his job.

While he continues to report directly to the commissioners as Emergency Manager for those tasks, his job involves a lot more preparedness work now with state and federal officials to make certain Chase County is well prepared for any type of disaster. In that expanded work, Kunnemann said he's met a lot of great people at NEMA and FEMA.

"And, the commissioners have also been great to work with" over the years, he added.

Kunnemann said he plans to stay on after Jan. 1 as an advisor as the new County Emergency Manager transitions into the job.

He and his wife, Lorna, will continue to reside in Imperial. Both are natives of the community.