

Contact: Dawn Shiley
IAEM Communications Manager
703-538-3542



News Release

Carolyn J. Harshman, MPA, CEM, Sworn in as IAEM-USA President

Oct. 21, 2021 (Falls Church, Va.) – Carolyn J. Harshman, MPA, CEM, has taken office as 2021-2022 president of the USA Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA). She was sworn in at the President’s Banquet during the Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Other officers sworn in were IAEM-USA First Vice President Cathy M. Clark, MA, IAEM-USA Second Vice President Justin Kates, CEM, and IAEM-USA Treasurer Walter English, III, CEM.

Upon taking office, Ms. Harshman expressed delight in the expansion of the range and growth of the profession of emergency management. “Emergency managers now work in a broad spectrum of disciplines including government, health care, non-profit organizations, education, public health, and the private sector. Over the past several years, organizations and employers have created positions dedicated to preparing for, responding to, mitigating against, and recovering from disasters,” declared Ms. Harshman. “It’s an exciting time to be in a field that is represented in such a broad swath of disciplines and industries. During my term, I will open the doors wide to all of these organizations making certain that we meet the needs of all of our members as we collectively advance the profession of emergency management.”

Ms. Harshman, a certified emergency manager with more than 30 years of experience in the field, is the president of Emergency Planning Consultants based in San Diego, California. Like many other members of IAEM, she entered the field of emergency management as a second career. Her first career was in land use planning for the County of San Diego and City of San Diego during the 1980s and 1990s. During that time, she worked on subdivisions, development permits, zoning ordinance revisions, community planning, and redevelopment projects. Tucked in the middle of that career was a temporary assignment with the County of San Diego’s Office of Disaster Preparedness where she co-authored an update to the County’s Emergency Operations Plan and served as the public information officer. By the late 1990s, she left local government to pursue full-time consulting in emergency management.

Ms. Harshman has extensive experience as an instructor of emergency management courses for FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute, California Specialized Training Institute, the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center, and numerous higher education institutions. As a consultant, she provides government entities services including plans, training, and exercises. Given her first career and knowledge of planning and land development, she specializes in hazard mitigation planning. As she enthusiastically explains, “It’s exciting to work with organizations who are dedicated to minimizing or eliminating threats associated with hazards. As studies have shown, every dollar invested in mitigation is seven dollars saved in response. I can’t imagine doing work that is more meaningful and impactful than mitigation planning.”

Ms. Harshman is proud to have participated in the first cadre of the National Emergency Management Executive Academy. Equally important is her dedication to IAEM having served six years as the chair of the

Conference Committee, two years overseeing the Leadership Symposium, and two years as chair of the Membership Committee. Next, she was elected regional president of IAEM-USA Region 9 which includes California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, and the Pacific Trust and Territories including American Samoa, Guam, and Northern Mariana Islands. After four years as regional president, she was elected to the IAEM-USA Presidential Team.

A life-long native of San Diego, Ms. Harshman holds a Master of Public Administration from San Diego State University. She lives in San Diego with her spouse Mary Claire Cuthbert, RN, and loving pets Bodacious, Beatrice, and Brodie.

IAEM-USA, the nation's largest emergency management professional association, is a non-profit professional organization representing more than 5,000 emergency management and homeland security professionals for local communities, state and federal disaster officials, private sector, non-governmental organizations, and others involved in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all types of disasters including acts of terrorism. IAEM provides access to the largest network of emergency management experts who can provide advice and assistance; the Certified Emergency Manager program; annual scholarships; a comprehensive monthly newsletter; and more.

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