



In this issue

[From the IAEM-USA President: Listening is First Step to Seeing Life Through Others' Lenses](#)3

[IAEM Seeks Nominations for Second Vice President and Treasurer](#)6

[Sponsor the 2021 IAEM Conference & EMEX](#)7

[IAEM Certification News](#)7

[Welcome New Affiliate Member Intelsat](#)8

[The IAEM-USA K-12 Caucus Invites You To Join](#)8

[IAEM In Action](#)9

[Disaster Zone: Who Is A Mitigator?](#)10

Index to February Special Focus Articles: "Diversity in Emergency Management: Lessons Learned"
[Page 11](#)

[EM Calendar/Staff](#) 42

[New Member Listing](#) 43

It is Time to Get Back Together Again – Register Now for the In-Person IAEM Annual Conference & EMEX

The IAEM 69th Annual Conference & EMEX [registration is now open!](#) IAEM is excited to reconnect in person this year in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Oct. 15-22. Join us for the premier emergency management conference of the year and reconnect with colleagues, learn from engaging speakers and see the newest products and equipment for the emergency management industry.

popular training courses and optional activities while you're waiting on budget approval. By registering using Early Bird pricing, you get savings of more than \$100 on registration fees.

Program/Training Highlight

The [complete program](#) is available on the IAEM website now. Breakout session areas include Leadership, Diversity, Preparedness, Technology, Collaboration and more. A quick review of the [speaker directory](#) demonstrates the value [continued on page 2](#)



Please remember IAEM offers an option to register now, and pay later. You can always select pay by "check" and lock in discounted early bird rates and seats in

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IT'S TIME TO GET TOGETHER AGAIN!



It is Time to Get Back Together Again – Register Now for the In-Person IAEM Annual Conference & EMEX

[continued from page 1](#)

the conference will provide. You will discover more than 100 of the top names in the field of emergency management.

Also available to register for now are the pre- and post-conference trainings. These are offered to conference attendees at no additional cost. Participants of these training courses can apply the attendance certificate received by the course provider towards the IAEM Certification Program under the Training section. These courses are offered from EMI, NDPC, FEMA and more. The courses

are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Register early to ensure you receive the opportunity to take your first-choice course.

Poster Showcase

The popular Poster Showcase will also be featured at the event. Check out your peers' research, practice, or general findings and expand your knowledge of the emergency management field during the program break on Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021.

EMvision Talks

EMvision Talks are an attendee favorite; they provide a forum for people to share a personal connection to an idea, experience or passion related to

emergency management, leadership, communication, community engagement or other related topics. Don't miss this engaging session on Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021. Talks are limited to seven minutes and are live on the plenary stage. We can't wait to see the insightful presentations this year.

Plenary Speakers

The plenary speakers for the Annual Conference in Grand Rapids have been secured. Featured speakers will include Dr. Chris Rodriguez, Ph.D., director, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA). Prior to joining HSEMA, Dr. Rodriguez served as director of New Jersey's Office of Homeland

[continued on page 5](#)

From the IAEM-USA President

Listening is First Step to Seeing Life Through Others' Lenses

By Judson M. Freed, MA, CEM, IAEM-USA President

This month's edition of the IAEM Bulletin deals with some pretty deep and sometimes divisive issues. Definitions, suggested actions, thought processes and statistics are going to be looked at through multiple lenses by many different people. Some will deny what is said out of hand, and others will embrace what is said without question. Some others will not understand – and a few may choose not to care at all. I will receive angry emails from all sides of the issue. So be it. Now let's talk about me.

To paraphrase my friend and IAEM Global Chair Robbie Robinson, my paycheck comes from Ramsey County, Minnesota, where I am the director of emergency management and homeland security. For those who do not have the map memorized, Ramsey County is one of the two counties encompassing the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Likely, you have heard of us – particularly over the past year. It was here that, last Memorial Day, an African American resident, George Floyd, was killed by a police offi-

cer while in custody. The former officer was convicted of murder and the videos of his death have been seen worldwide, spawning a new awakening of civil rights protests across the nation and the globe. But I am going back a little further to March and April of 2020.

During that first full month of COVID lockdowns and responses, I, like many of you, was tasked with "other duties as assigned" that I had never envisioned. The first of these was planning for the handling of an unprecedented number of expected deaths.

We began by working with our funeral homes, mortuaries, crematory retorts, and morgues. Then we progressed to leasing refrigerated storage, designing racking and shelving, and then procuring supplies. Our state enhanced their efforts and purchased a refrigerated warehouse that could be used to store PPE and – when needed – to store bodies. Remember that at the time, we were looking at Italy and NYC as predictive of what was going to occur. Thank God that didn't happen.



Judd Freed, CEM, IAEM-USA President

What did happen, though, was totally unexpected. You see, the neighborhood surrounding the warehouse that the state purchased (here in Ramsey County – and no, we were not part of the purchasing process) has a high concentration of first-generation and recent immigrants from a particular area of the world where they have serious concerns about being that close to human remains. I know that no one involved in the purchase of the site knew of these cultural beliefs. I also know that the purchase was necessary. But the fact that no one knew is no longer an acceptable excuse. We all COULD have found out and COULD have worked through the issues with the community (this did happen by the way, but after the purchase and after many acrimonious exchanges).

[continued on page 4](#)

From the
IAEM-USA President
[continued from page 3](#)

Because my agency is my agency and the site was in my county, this discussion and the solutions became part of my duties.

The “next thing” also began in late March and April. We began to see a massive increase in homelessness (some 300+%) and particularly in unsheltered homelessness. Due to our Governor’s orders, we could not break up encampments and due to COVID we had to find a way to shelter those in shelter sites in a way that provided social distancing AND find respite shelters for those homeless persons who actually contracted the disease. But the unsheltered homeless posed a serious issue as they live close together and by nature of an encampment have limited access to the sanitation needed (at the time) to reduce spread of disease. Unsheltered homelessness also fell to me as part of my new duties.

On this backdrop, add that Ramsey County is Minnesota’s most diverse and most densely populated county – 100% urban development. And then George Floyd was killed. The unrest that followed – protests, riots, fires, political upheaval – came on the heels of so many social issues already exposed:

disparate impacts of COVID and the lockdowns; homelessness issues; and the then-pervasive fears. This spawned discussions within my family and with my friends and colleagues. These were discussions that were challenging at best – discussions that pitted my preconceived ideas against myself, and that pitted my conclusions against those of my friends in some cases.

Here is a story. In August of last year, our downtown was hit by a massive fire that destroyed an under-construction apartment complex. The fire was directly across the street from our largest homeless shelter, and less than a block away from one of our largest homeless encampments. While the fire was a city issue, the impact to the shelter (which is operated under a contract from my county) was my issue. Members of my staff and I went to the scene the next morning to meet with the Fire Marshal (the fire was arson) and observe the damages to our shelter facility (fortunately minor) and any impacts to the encampment area.

While I stood on a corner and took some photos and made some notes, a man came up to me (still mostly socially distant) and we chatted for a bit. It was inconsequential stuff – the fire, the summer weather, the pandemic, masks, would there ever be a vaccine? It was sort of stuff

that all of us talked about at that point last year. It was nothing major – just chatting with a guy while I did my stuff. I thought nothing of it until it was time for me to go. “Hey,” I said, “I’ve gotta go to work – you have a great day.” His reply will stay with me. He said, “You too. And thanks. You’re the first person I’ve talked to in weeks who wasn’t being paid to listen to me.” He walked back into the shelter.

I hadn’t known he was homeless. Even though I had been working to help protect homeless people specifically for the previous couple of months, I had not paused to even consider what “those people” were like. Or what their “lens” on life might be. Imagine that – no one will talk to you. No one wants to talk to you. No one wants you anywhere near them. No one at all. That, too, tied into our family discussions about the world at the dinner table.

I don’t agree with everything everyone else has to say, and I don’t ask any of you to do so. What I do know is that all of us need to examine our own eyes for beams. We all need to talk about things – and actually listen to others. Listening is the first step to understanding anything. As emergency managers we know that sometimes “the way we have always done it” isn’t the best course.

[continued on page 5](#)

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[continued from page 2](#)

Security and Preparedness and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), where he became a senior analyst in its Counterterrorism Center.

Also featured will be Michael Sharon, deputy superintendent, Emergency Management Institute (EMI). He previously worked at FEMA Region III as director of National Preparedness, Planning Branch Chief, and Regional Integration Branch Chief. His presentation will be “On Watch for America: National Special Security Operations and Planning for the 2021 Presidential Inauguration.”

From the IAEM-USA President
[continued from page 4](#)

Now, I am not going to get into root cause analysis, discussions of mental health issues, etc. What I am trying to say, no doubt badly, is that looking at the world and trying to see it from another viewpoint is not a bad thing. Your “lens” may be correct, or it may not, but the best way to know is to

Next, IAEM will feature David W. Titley, Ph.D., the former chief operating officer, NOAA, Rear Admiral USN (ret.), and founder of “RV Weather.”

And finally, back by popular demand, Avish Parashar, author and speaker, will open the conference with his presentation, “‘Say, ‘Yes, And!’ Two Words that can Transform a Career, Organization, and Life.” Avish was a celebrated speaker at the 2016 IAEM Annual Conference.

Grand Rapids Will Surprise You!

This year’s Annual Conference will be in Grand Rapids, Michigan. – a city that will constantly surprise and delight you with authentic and unforgettable world-class experiences made easy, affordable and friendly. The high-energy downtown of-

listen and talk. Listening is an active skill and much harder to do than we think. Listening does not imply agreement – it only demands hearing and processing what you hear. That anonymous (to me) homeless guy I spoke with was wrong, however. I did receive payment from him in order to listen. That payment was simply some self-awareness on my part – a different view than I had taken before. That awareness has not shaken any core truth or destroyed my worldview. It

fers more than 90 restaurants, nightclubs, entertainment venues and museums within a five-minute walk of luxury hotels and a state-of-the-art convention center. Suburban attractions include Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, one of the Midwest’s most popular tourist destinations, and the 28th Street retail corridor.

Grand Rapids is also a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts, with activities and locales for every interest. You’re never more than six miles away from a body of water, so fishing, boating, and swimming are favorite pursuits. Biking, hiking, and running trails crisscross the region, passing through skyscraper canyons to forests and wetlands. [Book your hotel](#) with the IAEM room block now because space is limited. ▲

merely pointed out to me that I was not always living those core truths or hearing and seeing what was around me.

So, here ends my pontification: I do believe in absolute truths and moral foundations for ethical behavior. These truths involve listening to others and learning in order to behave ethically. None of us will be perfect, nor will we be in perfect agreement. But any of us can listen, discuss, learn, and change what needs to be changed. ▲

IAEM-USA Seeks Nominations for Second Vice President and Treasurer

The call for nominations for the IAEM-USA second vice president and treasurer was sent to members on June 1, 2021, and the nominations period remains open until 5:00 p.m., EDT, July 1, 2021. Members are encouraged to submit nominations to IAEM Headquarters via email to Info@IAEM.com. Nominations are reviewed by the IAEM-USA Nominations & Credentials Committee.

To be a candidate for national office the member must have been an Individual member for at least two consecutive years immediately prior to seeking office, and have served as a regional or national officer, national committee chair, or active national committee member for two consecutive years. For more details, see the [IAEM-USA Administrative Policies & Procedures](#). To be placed on the ballot all of the following must be submitted by the deadline of 5:00 p.m. EDT, July 1, 2021:

- A letter stating candidacy.
- A letter of permission from the candidate's immediate supervisor supporting the time and travel necessary to fulfill duties of the office.
- A brief resume.



■ Confirmation that the individual has been an IAEM-USA Individual member for at least two consecutive years immediately prior to seeking office.

Candidates that have declared as of June 23 for IAEM-USA president are: Mike G. Gavin; Brad Gilbert, OCEM; and Justin Kates, CEM. Walter English, III, MS, CEM, VaPEM, is currently the only declared candidate for IAEM-USA treasurer.

Campaign Articles

All national candidates will have articles in the August *IAEM Bulletin*. Campaign article (no more than 500 words), contact information, and photo must be emailed in Word or text format to IAEM Communications Director [Dawn M. Shiley](#) no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, Friday, July 16, 2021. A photo file (jpg, png, tif format) should be sent with the article.

Voting Period

The online voting period will open at 9 a.m. EDT, Monday, Aug. 2, 2021, and close at 5 p.m. EDT, Tuesday, Aug. 31, 2021.

Questions should be directed to IAEM Elections Staff Liaison [Rebecca Campbell](#). ▲

IAEM-USA Seeks Nominations in Regional Elections

IAEM Headquarters issued the call for nominations for IAEM-USA regions holding elections on June 1, 2021. The nominations period closes at 5:00 p.m. EDT, July 1, 2021. Six regions (IAEM-USA Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9) are holding elections concurrent with the IAEM-USA Council Elections.

All nominations must be submitted to IAEM Headquarters via email to IAEM Elections Liaison Rebecca Campbell. Information may be found in the guidelines in the Regional Bylaws. Any questions can be directed to [Rebecca Campbell](#). ▲

IAEM Certification News

Presentation of Certification Diplomas

Certification candidates who want to be recognized and receive their diploma at the 2021 IAEM Annual Conference during the Awards Banquet in Grand Rapids, Michigan must:

- Submit initial application by June 30, 2021, and have it approved during the July review meeting.
- Pass the exam and have it processed by IAEM Headquarters by Sept. 17, 2021.
- Let IAEM Headquarters know you will be attending the Awards Banquet at the conference. ▲

Certification Prep Course Is Available Online

IAEM has partnered with an online education company, MindEdge Learning, to develop the online AEM®/CEM® Prep Course (U.S. version). The course, which can be purchased through the [IAEM website](#), allows candidates to review the application process, study the exam materials, watch video commentary from Certified Emergency Managers, and access sample exam questions—including two full-length, 100-question practice exams. ▲



Sponsor the 2021 IAEM Conference & EMEX

IAEM is accepting sponsors for the IAEM Annual Conference & EMEX in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Information is available on the [IAEM Annual Conference page](#).

Companies interested in sponsorship opportunities may contact John Osborne at John@iaem.com to discuss options.

Are you taking full advantage of your IAEM membership?

Learn about IAEM member benefits [online](#).



Learn about the IAEM Certification Program at www.iaem.org/CEM.

Welcome Intelsat as IAEM's Newest Affiliate Member

As the foundational architects of satellite technology, Intelsat operates the largest, most advanced satellite fleet and connectivity infrastructure in the world. Intelsat applies its unparalleled expertise and global scale to reliably and seamlessly connect people, devices and networks in even the most challenging and remote locations. Transformation happens when businesses, governments and communities build a ubiquitous connected future through Intelsat's next generation global network and simplified managed services. IAEM welcomes Intelsat to membership. ▲



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The IAEM-USA K-12 Caucus Invites You to Join!

School district emergency managers – we are your people. All K12 partners (IAEM members) are welcome too! The Caucus focuses on resources, strategies, policies, procedures, activities, and events that assist the school district emergency manager in protecting lives and property from disaster.

Current specific activities might include School Reopening Plans through a Social-Emotional Lens and assisting in the development of school-based programs where none exist or where one is in need of guidance. Contact Caucus Chair [Scott Hudson](#) and Staff Liaison [Beth Armstrong](#), MAM, CAE, to express interest. ▲

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IAEM in Action



BCEM-IAEM-NEMA meeting with Administrator Criswell

On Thursday, May 20, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell shared her priorities: workforce; readiness response enterprise; climate change; and equity. Other topics included PA changes (IAEM opposes), preparedness grants, supply chain, homelessness, and more. IAEM was represented by IAEM USA President Judd Freed, AEM-USA Government Affairs Committee Chair Brad Gilbert and Thad Huguley and Beth Armstrong on staff.



Jeopardy

After a day of successful professional development and virtual connections during the June 7 IAEM Virtual Conference, 24 participants enjoyed a rousing Jeopardy competition including Masters of Ceremonies Duane Hagelgans, Judd Freed, Sophia Lopez and Diane Logsdon. IAEM members Peter Devenis and Chad Harris won bragging rights and special-edition IAEM ballcaps for having 5,500 points after final Jeopardy.

National Hurricane Conference, New Orleans, June 14-17



IAEM at the National Hurricane Conference, June 14-17, in New Orleans. L-R IAEM-USA Region 4 President Josh Morton CEM, IAEM Assistant Exec Director Chelsea Steadman QAS, IAEM-USA President Judd Freed, CEM, and IAEM-USA Region 6 President David Alamia CEM.



Former FEMA Administrator Dave Paulison visited the IAEM booth in NoLa June 16. He is shown with IAEM CEO Beth Armstrong, MAM, CAE.

IAEM Honors and Thanks the Sponsors of IAEM Encore Virtual Conference, June 7-8, 2021

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Disaster Zone

Who is a Mitigator?

By Eric E. Holdeman, Senior Fellow, Emergency Management Magazine

blog: www.disaster-zone.com | podcast: [Disaster Zone](#)

The immediate past Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administrator, Pete Gaynor, recently shared this story on a podcast. He was at a large conference of emergency managers – I think it must have been the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) annual conference – where he asked everyone, “Who here is a mitigator?” He relayed that only about a dozen people raised their hands. He also shared that had he asked, “Who here is a responder?” He figures that everyone would have raised their hand.

How do you see yourself? If you are an emergency manager, are you a “mitigator?” Or, are you only a preparedness person, a response person or a recovery person? In larger emergency management organizations, there are people who specialize in one phase of the profession, or like in disaster preparedness, there are exercise specialists and trainers, etc. However, the vast majority of emergency managers are “jacks of all trades” type of people doing one thing one day and working on something completely different in the afternoon or the next day.

Our mindset as it applies to mitigation needs to change radically – in my opinion. Because, if you

want to end the cycle of preparing, responding and recovering with a different outcome, you need to focus on disaster mitigation.

Mitigation is like fastening your car’s seatbelt. It will not absolutely keep you from being killed or injured in a car crash, but it drastically reduces the possibility of injuries to you and others riding in your car. It can only help and is a worthy investment.

There is now a huge opportunity to do more in the area of mitigation due to the initiation of the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program by FEMA. Just a few weeks ago, the president authorized another billion dollars to be allocated to BRIC which focuses on disaster mitigation. We will need more emergency managers versed in mitigation to pick up on this opportunity to radially improve the disaster resilience of their communities.

The term “disaster resilience” has also become a big buzz word in our world. If you want to impact the resilience of your community long-term, work on mitigation issues to reduce the level of damages that come with every disaster, large or small, human caused or naturally occurring.

Before I close, I’d like to add that “climate adaptation” is mitigation in our emergency management terms. Climate scientists use climate mitigation to talk about reducing the amount of carbon released into the air. Climate adaptation is about doing what we would call traditional emergency management mitigation to improve our ability to withstand the impacts of climate change to people and property from climate-related disasters. The linkage between climate adaptation and our traditional mitigation measures will become more prominent in the coming years.

Hopefully, the pandemic is in our collective rearview mirror for the immediate future. I’m not convinced that come the fall of 2021, we won’t see another surge in cases, but we have the vaccine and future increases should not be of the scope and magnitude that we dealt with a mere six months ago.

With that in mind, now is the time to reenergize your efforts toward disaster mitigation, which is where the impact of your efforts will be present today and long after you have moved on from your current position. ▲

Feature Articles for Special Focus Issue:

“Diversity in Emergency Management: Lessons Learned”

What Did the IAEM-USA Diversity Committee’s Open Letter to Emergency Managers Mean to You
by IAEM Diversity Committee 13

Why Diversity Is So Elusive in Emergency Management by Vincent B. Davis, CEM, president, Preparedness Matters Consulting, IAEM Diversity Committee Member.....15

Diversity in Emergency Management: Lessons Learned by Grelia Steele, CEM, Language and Communications Strategy Manager, Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs, IAEM Diversity Committee member18

A Guide to Helping Students and Early Career Professionals Break Into and Navigate the Field of Emergency Management by Amber Liggett, Pennsylvania Department of Health Public Information Officer, IAEM Diversity Committee member.....20

Seeking to Build Relationships with Diverse Partners? Think Big, Go Big, Be Fast and Be Smart About it by Marcus T. Coleman Jr., On Behalf of the IAEM Diversity Committee23

A DIET for Emergency Management: A Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Transformation by Dr. S. Atyia Martin, CEO & Founder, All Aces, Inc., IAEM Diversity Committee member25

The Emotional Work of a Ph.D.: Why I Cannot Forget My First Meetings as a Ph.D. Student by Susamma Seeley, CEM, IAEM Diversity Committee member ...29

Breaking Barriers: The Bold Journey for Building Inclusion and Equity by Suzanne L. Frew, President & Founder, The Frew Group, IAEM Diversity Committee member30

Pathways to Equity in Disaster Resilience by Derrick Hiebert, Advisory Specialist Master, Crisis and Resilience, Deloitte & Touche LLP, IAEM Diversity Committee member33

Partnering with Your Local Health and Human Service Entities Could Lead to Equity in Recovery by Lisa D. Swanson MPA , On Behalf of the IAEM Diversity Committee36

Diversifying Emergency Management by Addressing Inequities by Hieu Vo, Consultant, Constant Associates, and Gina Apruzzese, Analyst, Constant Associates40

Call for Articles
August 2021 IAEM Bulletin

Article Deadline: July 20, 2021

“Partnerships, Collaborations, and Smart Practices in Emergency Management”

■ **Description:** The importance of partnerships, collaboration, and best (SMART) practices cannot be overstated. With shrinking resources, more global interconnections and greater challenges, we must put words into action. Smart practices directly accomplish useful work in a cost-effective manner. While it is difficult to define or document a claim to a BEST practice, and even a claim of GOOD practice may be too grand, what are the examples of SMART practices in your EM life?

■ **Questions:** Any questions should be emailed to [John Osborne](#). Please refer to the author’s guidelines prior to writing and submitting your article.

■ **Article Format:** Word or text format (not PDF).

■ **Word length:** 750 to 1,500 words.

■ **Photos/graphics:** Image format (png, jpg, tif).

■ **Email article, photos, graphics to:** [John Osborne](#)

■ **Remember:** The IAEM Editorial Committee seeks articles for the eight non-special focus issues of this monthly publication. Also, publishing an article in the Bulletin may help you to meet IAEM’s certification requirements. ▲

The IAEM Bulletin, which is a benefit of IAEM membership, is in its 38th year of providing valuable information, resources and ideas for members.



What Did the IAEM-USA Diversity Committee's Open Letter to Emergency Managers Mean to You

By IAEM Diversity Committee

Last June the IAEM Diversity Committee issued an [Open Letter to Emergency Managers](#), in response to ongoing racial injustice occurring across the country. In the letter, we discussed the public health crisis that claimed thousands of lives and whose rate of infections and deaths disproportionately impacted black and brown communities across the country.

Those same inequities transitioned into issues with COVID testing, trust in the vaccine, vaccination locations, and vaccine availability in marginalized and underserved communities. We addressed the discriminatory practices and actions against our Asian American neighbors and communities, which has only increased in the last year. We pointed out the opportunity to build capacity and relationships in the communities we serve.

The committee asked each of you to take a moment to reflect about the recent events and the impact it has on our profession, families, coworkers, communities, and ourselves. To reflect on your beliefs, feelings, assumptions,

and biases in an open and honest way. That self-reflection is as important today as it was last year.

We suggested moving from conversations to actions. We asked emergency managers to take the next step. We offered the following:

■ **First – acknowledge the data.** Disasters have, will continue to, and do disproportionately impact minorities and ethnic groups.

■ **Emergency Managers: ask yourself ...**

- Has your staff addressed implicit bias and cultural competency in your required training?
- Has your office or jurisdiction ensured digital access and literacy for all residents?
- Do your office demographics match the communities you serve? If not, what are you doing about it?
- Do the languages and methods you utilize to communicate align themselves with the needs and demographics of your communities?

- Have you partnered with community partners and affinity groups to amplify your messages to the community to reassure those who don't trust government?
- Have you established a volunteer, student worker, or internship program to promote the profession while offering opportunities to those who are not represented or who are underserved in your communities?

■ **When engaging the community**

- Are your outreach efforts targeting the community equally?
 - Do your programs and efforts address social and racial equity?
 - Do your programs address access and functional needs?
- Are you addressing the needs of your community or are you just "checking a box?"
- Do your plans, training, exercises and all other programs ensure inclusivity and equity?

[continued on page 14](#)

IAEM Diversity Committee's Open Letter

[continued from page 13](#)

- Have you identified or established community partners in advance in your underserved and marginalized communities, to better address their social, economic, and cultural needs when responding to a disaster?
- Do you have a method or process to connect underserved or marginalized communities to disaster relief and community support services?

Reading the action items again begs the question of what changes have been made or what have you done in the last year? Did the moment pass you by with you thinking you would/could get to it tomorrow? Did something come up that distracted you or take your attention away to address a new concern? Did you just kick the can? Did your office lose out on the opportunity to self-access how you work together, involve your community-based organizations or community members?

Just like having those difficult conversations with family and friends and open discussion with staff and coworkers about interacting and building rela-

If our association and profession is to grow, we need to increase our ranks with women, people of color and those coming out of college.

tionships with your communities might provide steps or opportunities to bridge and mitigate gaps and trust. The steps are just as timely today as they were a year ago. So, as you look at your lessons observed or after-action planning for COVID, how many of these steps can be objectives as you move forward?

2020 expanded the role of emergency managers into public health issues, COVID-related sheltering concerns, and coordination of testing and vaccination sites under a nationwide declaration. It's only a matter of time before another disaster occurs and stretches resources, impacts our residents and neighbors causing additional challenges for our offices, employees, and residents. However, some of our actions shouldn't be just-in-time decisions.

As our ranks increase in the public, private, medical, and educational sectors, we should identify additional training outside of the typical emergency management courses for our

staff to prepare themselves. How have they been equipped to address social and environmental issues that are coming to your communities? No longer can we think that societal issues won't impact emergency management. Events that led to our open letter seem to continue across the country and it's only a matter of time before you're faced with an event that the actionable steps above might have or could have assisted your response, or shortened your recovery phase.

So, we ask you to review again the actionable steps as you move forward in 2021. But don't stop there – do an environmental scan of your community and a SWOT analysis of your office as it relates to the communities you serve. Address all aspects and spectrums of diversity in your actions, programs, services, and staff.

We said it then and will repeat it now – if our association and profession is to grow, we need to increase our ranks with women, people of color and those coming out of college. We should support those embarking on a second career in a new profession. We should make sure everyone has an *equal* opportunity no matter their age, race, gender, religion, orientation or level of education. ▲

Why Diversity Is So Elusive in Emergency Management

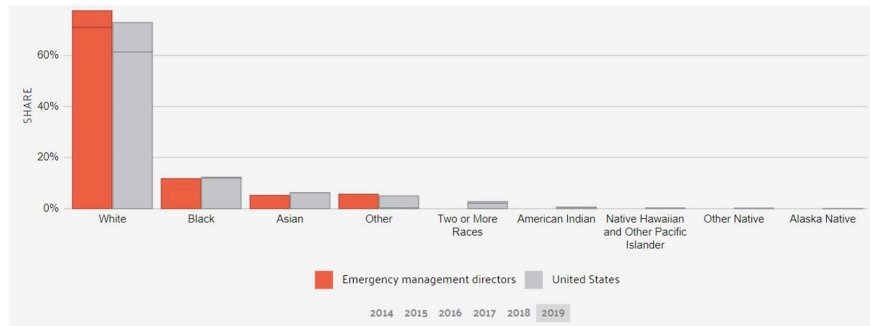
By Vincent B. Davis, CEM, President, Preparedness Matters Consulting
IAEM Diversity Committee Member

Overview

While some emergency managers like to think of ourselves as diverse or neutral, (disasters don't discriminate) the reality is we are far from it. Today, according to the U.S Census, 71% of emergency management directors are white, and 62% are male. Of the 50 state emergency management directors, only two are minorities.

In the 2019 National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) profiles of the state directors and their agendas for improvement in their agencies, not one of the 48 white state directors mentioned diversity and inclusion as a goal, or even at all in their summary of agency goals. There has only ever been one black FEMA administrator, (Lt. General Julius Becton served from 1985-1989 during the Reagan administration) and precious few black regional administrators, federal coordinating officers, or other high-level officials. Minority representation at the county and local levels is not much different.

According to a research paper



“The White Elephant in Emergency Management” by Juliet Golf (January 2021), University of Illinois Chicago Office of Preparedness and Response, the lack of equity isn't just gossip and hearsay. If you take a look at resources on FEMA's demographics (race, gender) and existing barriers for equal opportunity (the ability for a minority to be promoted), they make it clear that leadership has been aware of its issues for years but solutions haven't been put into place.

An overview of FEMA's 2018 employee race and gender data displays that the majority of staff are white (68.5%) and male (59.4%). It says that obstacles for promotion for minorities (people of color, women, etc.) exist not just in FEMA but throughout the agency that oversees it, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Government Accountability Office (the “government

watchdog”) reveals in its 2019 report that DHS and its agencies have identified failures in their Equal Employment Opportunity programs but lack policies and procedures for developing action plans to resolve them.

There are many reasons for the lopsided lack of representation by black, indigenous, and people of color in this profession. Part of it has to do with the origins of people hired over the past 40 years. Many came from the fire service, which was almost exclusively white male. Diversity was less of a priority than “hire for cultural fit” in which the prevailing culture was white and male.

Many emergency management organizations – I will not call anyone out here – have given lip service to diversity but have actually done little or nothing to address the appalling lack of diversity within the ranks. But

[continued on page 16](#)

Why Diversity Is So Elusive

[continued from page 15](#)

when we talk about diversity, some people automatically assume it's all about race. Among issues most ignored is the lack of representation by people with disabilities, and the failure of emergency management to embrace disability as diversity. Racism is not an opinion, it is a system, and emergency management is part of that system that often discriminates, albeit unintentionally, because the people making decisions come mainly from one background and set of values.

Why Diversity Is Important to Disaster Outcomes

Hiring a diverse population has secondary effects: to both mirror the populations it serves by employing those staff, and to hire people who advocate on their behalf. Employing and retaining minority groups is necessary to represent these populations, as research suggests African Americans and Latinos have a higher risk of disaster exposure and are disproportionately affected by them.

As such, they also are more likely to experience physical hardships and trauma during and after a disaster, including personal loss, damage to property and delay in restoration of utilities such as electricity and

water, and other basic resources, including food, shelter, and income. It is no secret that inequities and health outcomes for minorities are worsening drastically in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some investigative research indicates that disaster loan assistance has stark contrasts. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loan approval rates for zip codes with >90% white were 52% approved, in comparison with zip codes with >50% black, which were 28% approved. Data at the state-level did not differ much. The 10 states with the highest percentage of whites received 55% approvals; the 10 states with the largest percentage of black residents at 37%.

One may argue that home and business owners receive more financial support after a disaster, and they tend to be white, but it could also be argued that updating policy to provide more support to employees and renters would change that.

More importantly, these attitudes often result in inadequate resources, unequal treatment and discriminatory practices in certain communities. We not only need to direct resources and practices to better integrate the profession from an ethnic perspective, but also from a policy standpoint.

People from academia, public

health, human services and other related fields must be 'at the table' alongside emergency management policymakers.

Six Steps to Improve Diversity in Emergency Management

1. **Have an honest self-dialogue to examine your own views about race.** If you routinely subscribe to theories and attitudes that are harmful, you may not even know it. People are often reluctant to talk about racism with white colleagues because they immediately become offended and defensive. The goal of diversity is not to demonize, but rather to educate, inform, and change outcomes of the people we serve.
2. **Stop using phrases such as "disasters don't discriminate."** The disparity in deaths and negative outcomes for people of color is obvious. See Katrina, Sandy, Maria, Harvey, Flint, COVID-19, etc. While that may be a cute catchphrase the consequences for people of color, disabled, transportation challenged, people below poverty, senior citizens, limited English speakers, food insecure, and children are abundantly clear.
3. **Acknowledge that emergency management no longer gets to claim they have no role in the socioeconomic disparities of disasters.** Saying this is

[continued on page 17](#)

Why Diversity Is So Elusive

[continued from page 16](#)

nothing to do with us is neither fair nor correct. As emergency managers, we have a responsibility to work with our partners in the public and private sectors to address issues that contribute to poor disaster outcomes. Although we can't (nor should we) tackle these issues alone, we are either part of the solution or part of the problem.

4. Call out our colleagues when they display racist or biased attitudes. I have heard too often remarks from my colleagues disparaging minorities, the poor, and marginalized groups. This is not about being “politically correct.” Words matter, and words have consequences. Being racist is more than individual attitudes. Our silence gives permission for harmful behaviors to continue. Terms such as “those people are only scamming the system” are popular ones that I've heard far too often from my colleagues in dealing with survivors of disasters.

5. Include equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything you do. Often, I hear colleagues discussing and praising wonderful programs and organizational agendas to improve service delivery, create effi-

ciencies and increase disaster capabilities. Absent from those discussions is how they will include or impact equity, diversity, and inclusion. If you are not sure what that means or how to do it, see some of the organizations cited in the conclusion below.

6. Mentor, hire, and support diverse individuals who are trying to break into the profession. They often run into the “old boys” network, where people tend to hire and promote people who look (and think) like them. The diversity of voices and perspectives is not designed to fill a quota, but to enhance the mosaic of cultural and social richness, opinions, and ideas that make us better. The focus on whom you hire must be intentional – diversity is not going to occur organically. If you don't know any, ask somebody. There are plenty of qualified candidates out there, and they will not get hired if you don't hire and support them.

Conclusion

Not adding to the problem of lack of diversity isn't enough. Some of my white colleagues are too content with the knowledge that they do not directly practice racism. The fact is one may contribute, albeit unintentionally, by your silence.

It's too big of a problem to sit on the sidelines and cheerlead. We must ask ourselves every day, “*What have I done to combat racism or improve equity, diversity, and inclusion?*” Among the steps this author is undertaking to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion are:

- Developed and published the first ever Native Family Disaster Preparedness Handbook and Workshop to improve preparedness among Tribal residents in the United States (2017).

- Serve on advisory boards and committees for organizations, including the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management and Black Emergency Managers Association International (BEMA) and the International Network of Women in Emergency Management (InWEM).

- Support the work of Aspiring Emergency Managers Online (AEMO) by volunteering to mentor new talent.

- Raise awareness by including equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in all discussions, forums and meetings about the issues and solutions.

- Challenge our institutions, professional organizations and colleagues to establish and follow measurable goals and objectives for EDI. ▲

Diversity in Emergency Management: Lessons Learned

By Grelia Steele, CEM

Language and Communications Strategy Manager

Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs

IAEM Diversity Committee member

As COVID-19 rapidly escalated in communities around the world, many practices and services were put to the test within U.S. local governments. Was the tech infrastructure up to speed to support the demand for online services? Could services and programs provide support to meet the diverse needs that this pandemic was bringing to light? Were the systems equipped to communicate with people of different cultures and languages? These were just some of the questions many local governments were working to solve.

The clock was working against us in so many ways. Areas of work that had been identified as areas of improvement, all of a sudden became high priorities and had to be solved quickly. In July 2020, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors created a position to focus on language access across the county and I was appointed at the end of August.

The priorities piled up: How are we communicating with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) com-

munities? How can we connect with the local in-language media? How can we build a translation/ interpretation system? How can we translate critical messages in the least time possible? How can we build trust in LEP communities? How can we ensure LEP communities are a part of public meetings? How can we offer virtual translation and interpretation for public meetings?

Things were shifting quickly and there often were more questions than answers. Timelines got shorter and we had to compress our processes. Fortunately, despite the fast pace, every person I requested a meeting with made time available and the virtual world made meeting participation easier. But the question remained, is the work we are doing in over 10-12 hours a day, reaching the LEP communities?

The LEP communities were getting hit the hardest by COVID-19 testing demands that were high and hard to manage. It was difficult for people to adhere to COVID-19 protocols because their livelihoods were

in jeopardy. As I began to transition to my new role as Fairfax County's language access strategy manager and out of my role at the Office of Emergency Management, I began to lead a well-established group within the Joint Information Center that focused on multilingual/ cultural messaging. The group's strategy was to be very intentional about reaching the LEP communities.

Members of this group represent many ethnic origins and diversity; this ensures that we develop strategies that address the needs of communities who need to be reached. We established a way to expedite translation requests from a week to 24-48 hours; built a plan to connect with multilingual media; boosted Spanish social media channels; hosted live Facebook segments to connect with the community; and connected with local leaders who had the trust of LEP communities.

To help government entities develop multilingual/cultural messages the Municipal Language Access Network offered

[continued on page 19](#)

Diversity in Emergency Management

[continued from page 18](#)

solutions to communication barriers for LEP communities:

- Recruit bilingual or multilingual volunteers or internal staff to translate and interpret. Use language contracts to translate written materials.
- If auto-generated engines are used for translation, they MUST be checked by a fluent speaker.
- Offer an automatically generated engine for websites.
- Use an alert keyword in the language, if available, within your alert system.

Lessons learned from these practices so far

- **Fluency tests:** Develop a fluency test process to assess the level of fluency of staff or volunteers to avoid public complaints and/or mistrust in official messages.
- **Language contracts:** Establish an accelerated response time for emergency requests. Implement a style guide for frequently used languages.
- **Auto-generated engines for website:** Make sure this feature has a predominant location on your website.

■ **Alert systems:** Make sure your alert systems can adjust to languages that contain special characters.

As emergency managers, we know that partnerships are key to our success. During the response to COVID-19, networks that we have worked to build have been invaluable. We also have seen some of the gaps in partnerships. In many conversations with emergency managers across the country, there was a common theme of the need to develop partnerships with in-language media.

This partnership is critical and must be focused on as a method to develop trust and credibility in multilingual communities. In my work and experience, I have partnered with many in-language media sources to develop ongoing programming. This has allowed our government officials to share trends, myth bust, and tackle misinformation.

The practices implemented in response to COVID-19 need to develop further. They also need to live beyond after-action

reports. As we continue efforts of recovery, we need to pay close attention of how the current practices and services are affecting communities we have not had the opportunity to engage. Language is one aspect in many of our cases but access a greater role in the inequities that exist in our current programs. COVID-19 tested our systems and capacities like no other disaster had ever done. We have a lot to learn from and areas to improve upon.

Lastly, as we move beyond COVID-19 response and many EOC operations begin to scale down, all emergency managers must begin to review their one-size-fits-all approach. We have experienced first-hand the diverse needs of our communities; the overwhelming feeling cannot go without making a change of our current practices.

This applies to planning, outreach, messaging, recruiting, and all other areas of emergency management. Intentional change must be prioritized to be inclusive. Policies are required to ensure these changes are implemented.

Let's continue to share our lessons learned and the improvements we make to our practices and systems for an inclusive and diverse field of practitioners. ▲



A Guide to Helping Students and Early Career Professionals Break Into and Navigate the Field of Emergency Management

By Amber Liggett

Pennsylvania Department of Health Public Information Officer

IAEM-USA Diversity Committee member

Early career emergency managers (EMs) have historically transitioned from other, and oftentimes related careers, into emergency management (EM). Since the 1980s, formal education has become a popular avenue for people wanting to become EMs.

A lot of EM students are non-traditional in the sense that they are coming from different careers/backgrounds and want to learn the theory of disaster management science while other students are majoring in EM as traditional undergraduate or graduate students.

Either way, students attending these online and in-person EM programs can tremendously benefit from connecting with seasoned EMs to learn how to jumpstart their EM careers.

To initiate the pairing of seasoned EMs with student and even early career EMs, I have developed a guide for seasoned EMs looking to help students and early career profes-

sionals break into and navigate the field of EM.

Networking and Field Experience

When thinking about the best way for student EMs to break into the field, keep in mind that exposure to the field is key. Prior to the 1980s, that was a given, but field experience has to be sought after in today's educational setting. Networking with faculty and classmates as well as at conferences, including IAEM, are strong first steps to learn what field experiences are available. While attending conferences, students can learn ways to get involved by volunteering or applying for internships.

Another great opportunity for field experience that also counts as formal training is within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Emmitsburg, Maryland. This setting would be most appropriate for upperclassmen and graduate students to attend classes.

Lastly, provide students with field experience. EMI is appropriate for this as well as some courses have hands-on trainings and exercises that count as field experience for students. The combination of formal theoretical training and field experience provide students with a well-rounded education of EM.

If there are internship opportunities within your organization, determine if they can be remote or hybrid internships to ensure the opportunity is equitable for all interested students. Before COVID-19, this was not a popular option, though there was high demand. Now, many organizations have seen how efficient staff can be in a remote setting.

Many students looking to narrow down their niche in the field do not have the finances or flexibility to travel to different locations for summer or semester-long internships. So, having the option to complete an internship remotely, while maintaining frequent communication with an internship

[continued on page 21](#)

A Guide to Helping Students

[continued from page 20](#)

supervisor, is a viable option for their growth and maturity as future EMs.

Volunteer Opportunities

Seasoned EMs can provide student EMs with volunteer opportunities to become more involved and connected in the field. Encourage students to connect with their regional IAEM chapter and to volunteer on an IAEM committee. Share your network and field experience opportunities with them. Many students are coming from different fields/backgrounds and need to get their feet wet conducting EM projects.

Shadowing Opportunities

Guidance and tangible opportunities are imperative for student retention. As office buildings reopen and visitors are allowed, offer students a shadowing opportunity to see if your role interests them. Be open to receiving and answering on and off-topic questions about your role and the field in general. Overall, a hands-on experience shadowing will provide a glimpse into a typical day in an EM setting.

Mentorship

Mentorship is key to the successful transition of a student

to an early career professional. Seasoned EMs have a plethora of advice and experiences to share with students that are trying to gain a better understanding of the EM field. This can be as simple as sharing a past resume with a student so that they understand the proper format and key words needed on their resume to get a specific job, to interview tips and how to navigate the first year of working.

During the ongoing pandemic, a lot of us early career professionals have been in uncharted territory trying to build meaningful coworker relationships virtually while learning the duties of our position. This while getting acclimated to 40-hour work weeks, which end up being 40+ hour work weeks, while jumping right in to COVID-19 response mode. It is a major adjustment, and something that is best handled day-by-day.

Seasoned EMs who have dealt with long-term disaster response can offer advice as to how to keep from burning out. You can also offer advice on how to build relationships with coworkers when everyone is running short on energy and hyper-focused on the task at hand. Tips from seasoned EMs on how to navigate an EM office and emergency operations center are valuable for some-

one with little to no experience. Informational and formal mentorship provides long-term growth and confidence for students and early career EMs alike.

Personal Experience

To share my experience, I pursued a master's degree in EM after completing a bachelor's degree in meteorology, both from Millersville University of Pennsylvania. I joined IAEM when I began the EM degree and started building my EM network, both among my classmates and faculty. I was also eager to attend the IAEM conference. While there, I expanded my network further by learning of career and training opportunities. Most notably, I learned of the FEMA EMI.

Later, I went through the National Emergency Management Basic Academy at EMI. The Academy provided me hands-on field experience, training and more networking opportunities with students of the academy and other EMs on campus. Many of these individuals were seasoned professionals either in EM or transitioning to EM from related fields, so I was able to soak up a plethora of knowledge during my time at EMI.

The National Emergency Man-
[continued on page 22](#)

A Guide to Helping Students

[continued from page 21](#)

agement Basic Academy paired with my EM degree equipped me with skills for my current position as the public information officer at the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Here, I focus on emergency preparedness and response communications for infectious disease and other public health emergencies.

Just last year, I got more involved with IAEM in my regional chapter and as a member of the Diversity Committee. The Diversity Committee has taught me about the diversity and equity issues facing EM today. These are issues that I can identify in my day-to-day work and help to address based on committee conversations on the topics.

My experience is just one of many early career professionals that have gotten to where they are today because of guidance from seasoned EMs in the aforementioned areas. In order to bridge the gap between students, early career and seasoned professionals, I encourage all seasoned EMs to reflect on personal experiences and connect with students and early career EMs seeking advice and field experience. Together, students, early career and seasoned EMs will strengthen the field of EM. ▲

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Seeking to Build Relationships with Diverse Partners? Think Big, Go Big, Be Fast and Be Smart About it

By Marcus T. Coleman Jr.

On Behalf of the IAEM Diversity Committee

I have seen what is possible when there is a tangible and actionable commitment to unlocking the full potential of diverse partnerships. This includes investing in a whole community approach to disaster operations that affirms the importance of neighbors helping neighbors. It pays to be smart about how we approach advancing equity and support historically underserved populations.

If emergency managers do this while advancing equity and supporting historically underserved communities in existing emergency management systems, we build the social capital necessary to withstand disruptions from all hazards.

When crisis leaders refuse to take this approach, we leave our neighbors and our communities susceptible to experiencing compounding inequities in times of crisis. Climate change brings a sense of urgency to getting it right. In the United Nations of Disaster Risk Reduction report, "[Human Cost of Disasters](#)," we get a glimpse of the scope and scale of human

suffering: "Between 2000 and 2019, there were 510,837 deaths and 3.9 billion people affected by 6,681 climate-related disasters. This compares with 3,656 climate-related events which accounted for 995,330 deaths (47% due to drought/famine) and 3.2 billion affected in the period 1980-1999."

Emergency managers have an opportunity to serve as a standard bearer in organizing, equipping, training, and learning from diverse partners, which include civil rights organizations, caregivers, and faith-based communities. Working with these groups alongside all levels of government in partnership strengthens whole community resilience. So how do we do this? One perspective uses the advice from one of my favorite emergency managers, former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, to make it happen.

Think big (How bad could it be?) – The bigger the problem, the bigger the need for partnerships. One step toward thinking big is for crisis leaders to co-create a memorandum of agreement with organizations

focused on civil and human rights. The [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#) (NAACP) is one organization interested in thinking big on building resilience. In addition to having a nationwide emergency management task force, the NAACP has developed [In the Eye of the Storm: A People's Guide to Transforming Crisis & Advancing Equity in the Disaster Continuum](#) to help their local branches and emergency managers work together to increase equity across the disaster continuum.

Go Big (Better to have too much than not enough) – Lack of imagination is not a viable reason for failing to meet the needs of historically underserved communities. Crisis leaders should continue to build strong partnerships with disability rights organizations. This includes going big on mobilizing private sector partners as well.

For example, the [World Institute on Disability](#), led by Marcie Roth, is co-lead for [The Global Alliance](#), a "Call-to-Action" to galvanize disability-led organizations

[continued on page 24](#)

Seeking to Build Relationships With Diverse Partners

[continued from page 23](#)

tions, foundations, corporations and other allies to identify needs and link partners to accelerate assistance and resources, both during and after disasters.

Go fast (speed is key) – Many governments have taken various steps toward advancing equity in their disaster operations in a thoughtful manner. Using partnership resources like FEMA’s [Engaging Faith-Based and Community Organizations: Planning Considerations for Emergency Managers](#), completing [FEMA Independent Study Course 505: Concepts of Religious Literacy for Emergency Management](#), and connecting with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters and State VOADs on a regular basis will help you and your team build partnerships

much faster than trying to figure it out on your own.

The University of Southern California Center on Religion and Civic Culture, the National Disaster Interfaith Network, and New York Disaster Interfaith Service developed a [Disaster and Religion](#) app to help all emergency managers and first responders quickly understand the needs and interests of people they may meet while responding to a disaster.

Be smart about it (adjust as more information becomes available) – As migration trends continue to quickly evolve as a result of crisis, disasters, and impacts from climate change. To accelerate planning and organizing activities in support of migrants and refugee populations, crisis leaders should follow the guidance presented by the [Institute of Diversity and](#)

[Inclusion in Emergency Management and Welcoming America](#). Their guidance, “[Establishing and Maintaining inclusive Emergency Management with Immigrant and Refugee Populations](#),” helps leaders identify and build a repository of resources and relationships with community-based immigrant and refugee service organizations. These may include refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant rights organizations, faith-based organizations or houses of worship, local businesses, among others.

Building partnerships with natural first responders is ongoing process. Like the preparedness cycle it requires investment in planning, organizing, equipping, training, and engaging your team and community. We have countless emergency managers already on the journey to promote an approach to emergency management that advances equity and keeps the lived experiences of historically underserved populations as the priority. My hope is more IAEM members will join the work the various caucuses and committees committed to this work. ▲

Marcus T. Coleman Jr. is a partner with the Truman National Security Project and alum of the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative. Views expressed are his own.

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A DIET for Emergency Management: A Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Transformation

By Dr. S. Atyia Martin

CEO & Founder, [All Aces, Inc.](#) | Online Learning Community: [IntentionallyAct.com](#)

IAEM Diversity Committee member

Emergency management has struggled with a range of diversity, equity, and inclusion challenges in the field – from diversifying the pipeline to ensuring equitable outcomes after disasters. Our challenges are a national struggle. There are research-based, experience-informed and practical approaches to intentionally embedding equity into emergency management practice.

This article focuses on embedding equity into the field, which for me is removing the barriers that are in the way of marginalized people's ability to rightfully access, participate in and benefit from policies, programs, and resources.

We have increasingly been discussing the disproportionate burden of post-disaster outcomes on socially vulnerable or priority populations in our communities – people of color (Black, Indigenous/Native American, Latino/a/x/e, and Asian people), people living in poverty/working poor, people with disabilities, children, older adults, etc. Despite the growing awareness, we still find the same thinking and behavior

that leads to these outcomes. These recurring missteps are the signs and symbols of policy, practice, and culture challenges that are negatively impacting people our mission charges us to serve.

The root causes of inequities require much more space than this article will allow for. However, we can still explore opportunities to accomplish our mission in a way that intentionally breaks down barriers that priority populations face. Why priority populations? It is not because anyone is more important than anyone else. It is because equity has never happened by accident and by addressing the range of needs upfront, we increase access and participation for everyone. Without considerations for the context expertise that communities bring, we are missing a major source of information and partnership that effective emergency management demands.

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

As described by FEMA, the National Incident Management

System (NIMS) guides all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and the private sector to work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from incidents. As emergency management professionals, we also have the opportunity to be intentional about including communities as stakeholders in how we plan and implement the comprehensive approach that NIMS is meant to provide.

Resource Management describes standard mechanisms to systematically manage resources, including personnel, equipment, supplies, teams, and facilities, both before and during incidents in order to allow organizations to more effectively share resources when needed. We can recruit, hire and deploy personnel to support emergency responses with diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront.

This increases the likelihood that we do not overlook candidates for hiring or opportunities that can propel their careers and improve our organizations. Being intentional also reduc-

[continued on page 26](#)

A DIET for Emergency Management

[continued from page 25](#)

es the chances that we stay locked into the limitations of our thinking because of the ways we have been socialized to perceive the potential of a candidate or employee based on known identities they hold.

Command and Coordination describes leadership roles, processes and recommended organizational structures for incident management at the operational and incident support levels and explains how these structures interact to manage incidents effectively and efficiently. In our onsite and emergency operations center structures, the urgency and habits of past responses can influence the issues we prioritize.

Research shows that the time pressure, our mental state and complexity each limit our rationality. Which means we are more likely to do whatever is the path of least resistance. In other words, we are likely to do things as we have always done them.

This leads to perpetuating unintentional social inequities. We need an equity officer role at the command level within our incident command system (ICS) that people can bring their

observations and information from community partners so those considerations are meaningfully integrated into the decisionmaking process.

In order to make this work there needs to be updates in training (both longer term and just-in-time training) so everyone is clear about what equity is and their role in bringing issues and concerns to the equity officer. Additionally, the equity officer has to be respected and treated as a command level position with the support they need to be successful in partnership with their colleagues.

Communications and Information Management describes systems and methods that help to ensure that incident personnel and other decision-makers have the means and information they need to make and communicate decisions. Community partners are valuable allies in any emergency response. Find ways to share sanitized situation reports/briefs with them so they can have context.

Additionally, with developed relationships and bidirectional communication infrastructure, communities can provide additional information to the response so we have a more sophisticated common operating picture.

Emergency Management Mission Areas

There are many opportunities to embed equity across the emergency management mission areas that organize the FEMA core capabilities. Below are realities within each mission area along with a basic description of the complexity of different realities that we can address.

■ **Protection & Mitigation:** We do not experience the impact and amount of loss of life and property the same ways. The ways that we prioritize critical infrastructure and potential threats and hazards do not often consider value beyond dollars and cents. As a result, there is an inequitable distribution of resources meant to protect infrastructure in our communities and reduce the impact of disasters.

■ **Response:** We unconsciously apply different priorities on lives, property, environment, and meeting needs because of our social conditioning. If we own this difficult reality, we can focus our energy on investing in efforts to ensure we do not fall into psychological traps during responses that are often literally a matter of life and death and a matter of shattered livelihoods.

[continued on page 27](#)

**A DIET for
mergency Management**
continued from page 26

■ **Recovery:** When we do not embed equity into recovery we miss opportunities to remove barriers from access, participation and benefits. Removing barriers informed by the experiences of priority populations, reduces the barriers we all face (think curb-cut effect) to a full transformation of our infrastructure, housing and the economy, as well as the health, social, cultural, historic, and environmental fabric of our communities. Additionally, it challenges us to think more creatively about bouncing forward and not returning to previous states that were problematic for people and our national resilience.

**Considerations for NIMS &
Emergency Management
Mission Areas**

■ **Threats and hazards:** Who or what do we perceive as threats? Who or what do we consider to be threatened? Does the data bear this out?

■ **Burdens/benefits:** Who benefits from our efforts? What will we do to remove barriers to the benefits? Who may be burdened by our efforts? What will we do to mitigate the potential burdens?

■ **Voice and choice:** Who is participating in creating the shared pool of knowledge that informs our decisions? Where are there opportunities for people to make decisions for themselves?

■ **Measuring all that matters:** What are we measuring? Why? Is the data disaggregated by priority populations? If we do not have the data, what do we need to do to get it?

■ **Contracting for equity:** Who are we spending our money with as vendors broken down by priority populations? What are we doing to support spending with vendors that are representative of the range of communities we serve?


Wherever you are in the nation, please take a moment to identify ways that you can be proactive disruptors of oppression and inequities. We may not have created the situation of inequities we are currently experiencing, but we have a broad landscape of action to facilitate a diversity, inclusion and equity transformation (DIET) so we do not continue to contribute to them.

It is normal for us to feel energized for change and simultaneously anxious about the uncertainty of the path forward. It is my hope that more of us will overcome the discomfort of owning our power to learn and change what is in our influence. This liberates us to orient ourselves towards action. We will not always get it right, but we will never create the kind of impact that we want without discomfort and innovation.

I leave you with two quotes: (1) “We cannot wring our hands and roll up our sleeves at the same time, so we might as well roll up our sleeves and get to work.” (2) “Most people do not recognize opportunity because it comes disguised as hard work.”

I look forward to seeing my fellow emergency management colleagues seizing the opportunity and investing the hard work of accomplishing our shared mission for all Americans. ▲

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<p>In this issue</p> <p>CEMNews 3</p> <p>From the IAEM/USA President 4</p> <p>CEMCorner 6</p> <p>Call for Contributions</p>	<p>Special Focus Issue: “Honor the Past, The People We Remember”</p> <p>A Letter to Doc</p> <p>By Carrie Speranza, CEM, IAEM-USA Secretary, and IAEM-Global Communications Director</p>
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The Emotional Work of a Ph.D.: Why I Cannot Forget My First Meetings as a Ph.D. Student

By Susamma Seeley, CEM
IAEM Diversity Committee member

You may be wondering why I waited this long to write about my first days as a Ph.D. student. Last year after the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the University of Delaware (UD), like other schools, called for work groups of professors, staff, and students to have conversations about the systemic inequities faced by students of various backgrounds.

Many of these efforts seemed performative but we joined them anyway in hope of spurring change and making lives different. It turned out that joining these groups was fruitless because some members managed to diminish the perspectives of students of color while using our emotional labor and presence. This experience angered and upset me so much that I must share it with others.

The Graduate Record Exam

I started my Ph.D. journey in the summer of 2017 when I moved to Delaware to study at University of Delaware. My coursework may have started at the end of August, but my doctoral journey started much earlier with the application.

Applying to a Ph.D. program required many steps before I even completed an application. In my case, it also meant taking the [Graduate Record Exam](#) (GRE) and relearning algebra, geometry and other quantitative skills that I have not touched since my high school and undergraduate years.

The GRE exam and any current prep materials and courses also cost money. I was fortunate that I had money saved to apply to these costs and had the time to prep for the exam. The day I took the exam, I can tell you that I was praying just to pass. I knew that my Ph.D. application would be incomplete without passing GRE scores. I was also realistic about my test anxiety and inability to test well in these situations. When I completed the exam, I got my score, and it was low. But I did not care; I passed. I could check the GRE off my list.

Once I assembled my application with my writing sample, letters of recommendation, transcripts and resume, I sent it off with a prayer. We must put so much faith in the admissions committee. Will they see us as whole people or only as a GRE

score? I know with such a low GRE score I many have been seen only as that – a low-scoring individual.

I even had a conversation with a professor who told me I would not be a good candidate for the program because my score was so low. I told this professor that in my professional capacity I had no problems working with my multidisciplinary colleagues even when I did not fully understand their areas of study or specialization.

As a trained, professional emergency manager, I had the ability to collaborate and learn with and from my colleagues. Since the GRE is just a test of arbitrary quantitative and qualitative assessments all with a typing test, it could not measure my actual work, abilities or [future potential](#).

In the end, I was accepted into the disaster science Ph.D. program but still placed into the “less than” category because of my abysmal GRE score. In fact, during my first two meetings with UD professors, I was given suggestions on becoming a better graduate student.

[continued on page 29](#)

The Emotional Work of a Ph.D.

[continued from page 28](#)

One of those suggestions included joining the UD chapter of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). I thought that was a remarkably interesting suggestion. As a reminder, these meetings happened in the summer of 2017 and I had just spent the last five years (2012 to 2016) as the chairperson of the IAEM-USA Conference Committee.

Did either of these professors look beyond my GRE score and read my application? I wonder. Maybe they would have noticed that I was a Certified Emergency Manager and have been a practitioner in my field since 2008. How about the fact that I was a medic in the U. S. Army or that I completed the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative Executive Education Program at Harvard?

Please note that I met with both professors separately, and both independently suggested that I join the IAEM chapter. When I told each of them that I spent the last five years as the conference chairperson for IAEM, they were both quiet and perhaps, a little embarrassed. What was worse was that both professors told me that I would be “useful” for their students.

I realized at this point that I was not an individual to them. I was acceptable because I could serve as a resource for their other more important students. After those meetings, I was extremely disappointed and disheartened, but I did not realize my journey was just beginning.

Being “othered” in this situation by two separate professors within an hour of each other was one of the first indications that my doctoral journey was not just an intellectual pursuit. At that point, I did not know if I was being “othered” for being a non-traditional student who came from emergency management practice, for being an older female student, or for being non-white. Unfortunately, it took months before I realized the emotional toll I dealt with as well as the typical challenges of a doctoral program.

As I mentioned in my quick intro, I joined a diversity and inclusion committee to reduce the social inequities and power imbalances. However, I found myself surrounded by accomplished individuals who were still unable to see how their privilege and power were advantages that non-white individuals will never have access to.

After four years of staying quiet about my experiences, I can no longer ignore the willful

ignorance of the role of privilege and power. As a woman of color, it is time to bring my concerns forward in a space where they will be heard rather than invalidated as “just my perspective” and “not the whole story” from individuals who are not people of color and who are unable to acknowledge the differences in lived experiences.

Many of us suffer because of the imbalance of power where we relive or experience trauma regularly in the classes we take, the work we do, or in exchanges with colleagues, students, professors, or staff. The imbalance of power exists because of hiring practices, implicit bias and where some white individuals are unable to acknowledge the privilege (and power) they hold in being white.

Additionally, I have found my thoughts and my feedback questioned for its validity or quality because as a woman of color, I must be “angry” when I challenge the status quo or the dominant group. I am also speaking out against the frequent and problematic white centering or misappropriating of the experiences and emotions of Black, Indigenous, and other peoples of color (BIPOC).

In my practice as a disaster manager, I often said that I

[continued on page 39](#)

Breaking Barriers: The Bold Journey for Building Inclusion and Equity

Suzanne L. Frew, President & Founder, The Frew Group
IAEM Diversity Committee member

If anything positive has come out of this dark turbulent year of hate crimes, changing weather patterns and a virus that has tragically impacted our community and devastated our Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and African American communities of color, it is that as emergency managers, we have found new voices and platforms to powerfully advocate for diversity and equity.

We are pushing our profession to expand skills and mindsets to embrace inclusion and diversity and improve equitable practices. In my 30 years of working both the public and private side of emergency management, specializing in inclusion and cultural competency, I have never been as optimistic as I am at this moment that these changes are occurring. I have faith.

The Fierce Teacher

COVID-19 broke the cone of silence regarding our country's response capabilities to adequately serve our most vulnerable populations. More than a year out, the deadly pandemic continues to challenge us, delivering heart-wrenching losses to communities across the na-

tion, none more so than those whose populations emergency managers have struggled for decades to effectively serve.

The pandemic continues to shine a powerful light on long-standing social inequities – who gets vaccinated, who carries the highest risk factors, who is challenging to reach? The increased risk of COVID impacts many of the same vulnerable population groups, neighborhoods, and social communities as those vulnerable to natural hazard risks: those with fewer resources, higher poverty rates, living in crowded and inadequate housing, having poor access to transportation, and are fearful of immigration status.

For years, our colleagues in public health have served these same high risk communities. Yet public health socialized diversity and “cultural competency” to better understand, appreciate, and interact with people from many cultures and belief systems that were different from one's own. Its policies, services, and outreach have reflected extensive inclusion and equity. This is not the same story in our profession, and because of this inequity, communities

– urban, suburban, rural, and island – have paid the price in loss of life, properties, and culture, and been challenged with issues of environmental and social justice.

Our Professional Challenge

Effectively serving diverse populations continues to be problematic for emergency management organizations at all levels. While hazard vulnerability and risk assessments (HVRA) diligently track facility risk, floodplains, and fault lines, they often fail to capture nuanced social factors such as digital inequities and housing and food insecurities. Current Programs often take a one-size-fits-all cookie cutter approach while overworked and under-resourced teams have limited capacity to craft innovative inclusive approaches, such as those founded upon human-centered design principles frequently instituted by tech companies.

Yes, We Want to Help ... But Can We?

Our workforce makeup, policies, programs, and communications negatively impact

[continued on page 31](#)

Breaking Barriers

[continued from page 30](#)

mission success because our tradition is not grounded in cultural competence or diversity. Emergency management was birthed out of a middle class, white, patriarchal model, often drawing from law enforcement, fire services, and the military. Only in the recent years has our professional community more readily taken steps to build an inclusive workforce and partner with those who reflect the people we serve, particularly Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

In recent years, we have taken strides towards advancing women in leadership positions. Deanne Criswell has made history as the first woman confirmed as FEMA's 12th administrator. However, diversity is not only about ethnicity and women. We still face unconscious/conscious biases in our workforce. We must expand our demographic makeup and better reach our varied constituencies, including LGBTQI, the culturally and religiously diverse, old and young, and many other societal groups not "traditional" to mainstream America.

We are now openly beginning that awkward, long overdue, honest conversation about our

organizations' workforce cultural and ethnic makeup and how to adequately serve diverse populations. We must now ask ourselves hard questions. Are we preparing ourselves to accommodate the unknown changes due to shifting social landscapes? Are we preparing to tackle the increased risk from climate change on vulnerable populations?

Meeting Our Mission Mandate

National frameworks such as the Presidential Policy Directive (PPD-8) and the National Disaster Recovery Framework guide us towards addressing the "whole community." Reports such as FEMA's 2019 "Building Cultures of Preparedness" have taken a strong lead in emphasizing the role culture plays in the safety mission.

A problem is that we don't know how to implement the concept of serving a whole community. We must infuse innovation into our strategies and plans, collaborate with new partners and advocates, expand team skills, and devise metrics for inclusion.

Building Team and Partner Capacity

Creating inclusion initiatives is tremendously rewarding. Having experienced capacity

building needs throughout my years of service, I spearheaded development of a one-day workshop to build cultural competency skillsets in public safety and emergency management. Along with another colleague from The Frew Group, my small consultancy practice, I conducted the workshop three times in different parts of a county in Northern California during the spring of 2020, not long after their tragic fires and floods, and just before COVID hit.

Participants represented a wide range of service sectors. Over the day, they learned how cultural competency impacted emergency management and social behaviors, explored implicit and unconscious bias (internal reflection), cross cultural communications and resources and tools. Finally, they participated in a "Practice Application Accelerator" to craft their first steps towards improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in their work environment, programs, and teams.

The workshops were enthusiastically received. As a result, discussions are now underway to offer the workshop to other communities and the workshop has been recrafted into an online offering. Similar types of capacity building efforts are needed everywhere.

[continued on page 32](#)

Breaking Barriers

[continued from page 31](#)

Creating Inclusive Exercises

Another capacity-building approach is applying an inclusive lens to exercises. While stakeholder exercises may adhere to HSEEP protocols, from my experience most do not adequately imbue inclusivity in the scope, Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs) or metrics. Aligned to exercise objectives and core capabilities, EEGs offer a consistent tool that guides exercise observation and data collection. By writing culturally competent EEGs with inclusive-minded capability targets and critical tasks, we will expand diversity-oriented skillsets and the perspectives of participants.

I recently served as a developer/evaluator in the role of subject matter expert on cultural competency and inclusion on a large terrorism exercise for a major West Coast port. In my role, I ensured the Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) contained events and injects specific to diverse populations. For example, we included women who were reluctant (or refused) to be touched by paramedics due to religious beliefs, injury to elderly who became disoriented and lost, undocumented workers, and international visitors.

A critical discovery was that the

region's State Department had never been brought into a locally based disaster exercise and planning effort. Collaboratively, we developed response protocols for international visitors and individuals living, studying, and working in the United States. Not long after completion, the first ship bringing COVID sailed into another West Coast port. Because of the exercise activities, the port we supported had in place diplomatic contacts and coordination protocols.

California's Diversity Role Model

An excellent inclusion role model is California's Senate Bill (SB)160, a 2019 bill designed to avert disproportionate impacts to the state's most vulnerable communities. S.B. 160 established a new mandate to drive cultural competency in emergency services and ensure the needs of all community members are addressed, with priority to "culturally diverse communities."

The bill articulates "culturally diverse communities to include, but is not limited to, race and ethnicity, including Indigenous peoples, communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities; gender, including women; age, including the elderly and youth; sexual and gender minorities; people with disabilities; occupation and income level including low-in-

come individuals and the un-housed; education level; people with no or limited English language proficiency; as well as geographic location." This bill is a starting point of inclusive practices for us all.

To build equitable emergency management, we must expand ourselves and trusted partners to reflect those we serve, build culturally competent capabilities, program services, and communication outreach. Let's think innovatively! These bold steps will help prepare us for whatever the future holds. ▲

Suzanne serves as the liaison between IAEM Diversity Committee and Emerging Technology Committee. She is a consultant, trainer, speaker and the coauthor or contributing author to four disaster risk communications/emergency management books and numerous professional articles. She is an instructor for the University of Hawaii's National Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC). A longstanding, outspoken advocate for addressing the unique socio-cultural needs of the whole community, Suzanne leads The Frew Group, a woman-owned small business (WOSB) that creates inclusive, culturally competent risk and disaster strategies, communications and exercises and trainings in emergency management and disaster risk reduction.

Pathways to Equity in Disaster Resilience

Derrick Hiebert, Advisory Specialist Master, Crisis and Resilience, Deloitte & Touche LLP
IAEM Diversity Committee member

Emergency Management [Accreditation Program Standard 4.2](#) states that emergency managers should identify and address the largest potential sources of loss within their community. While disasters can hit everyone, losses and delays in recovery are not equally distributed, with poorer families and marginalized communities less likely to maintain the assets needed to withstand the shock of a disaster and more likely to be exposed to its [worst effects](#).

Mitigation is one way emergency managers can address the increase in [inequality communities' experience](#) after major disasters. FEMA is already moving this direction – as of this writing, a Request for Information has been released for feedback on challenges and shortcomings with regards to equity in [federal disaster programs](#).

For communities looking to move from talking about equity to achieving more equitable outcomes, this article lays out a set of principles and actions that may lead to real progress, building on the strength of your community to achieve meaningful and long-term improvements in risk and vulnerability.

Principle 1: Your program should unite all phases of emergency management

Emergency management is not really designed to be a set of four discrete mission areas (preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery), in which practitioners typically focus on one or two to the exclusion of others. Each element brings some critical considerations and capabilities that can lead to a more responsive program.

Actions

- Conduct a community capability assessment. This assessment provides a grassroots look at what drives risk and resilience in your community, determines what are community assets in which you can invest, and what areas exacerbate potential for loss and therefore should be reinforced?

- Response plans should account for risks to the response itself and identify mitigation actions that can improve response effectiveness. Assess response capabilities based on your ability to not only address overall community need, but also those needs most likely to be acute.

- Leverage data so that that early-phase disaster response is targeted to where losses are expected to be most serious, not just where you receive resource requests. Utilize tools such as FEMA's [Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool](#) (RAPT).

Principle 2: Prioritize investments that explicitly benefit marginalized or vulnerable communities

A project designed in partnership with a vulnerable community, accounting for future development and climate conditions, is worth 50% of available points in the FEMA [Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities](#) (BRIC) qualitative scoring criteria.

Actions

- Consider a method of prioritizing projects statewide that explicitly focuses on benefits to communities more likely to suffer loss and recover slowly. King County, Washington, uses the following criteria, scoring each on a range from 0 to 4 or -4 if the project [actively harms the value area](#).

[continued on page 34](#)

Pathways to Equity in Disaster Resilience

[continued from page 33](#)

- **Equity, social justice and vulnerability** (project is designed to benefit, account for, and include vulnerable populations, especially those in the community most likely to suffer harm from a disaster and those likely to take the longest to recover after a disaster).
- **Collaborative** (project is supported by multiple jurisdictions or agencies)
- **Multiple benefit** (project has benefits beyond hazard risk reduction, including environmental, social, or economic benefits)
- **Adaptation and sustainability** (project helps people, property and the environment become more resilient to the effects of climate change, regional growth, and development)
- **Effectiveness** (project is designed to attain the best-possible benefit-cost ratio)
- **Urgent** (project is urgently needed to reduce risk to lives and property)
- **Shovel-ready** (project is largely ready to go, with few remaining roadblocks that could derail it)

■ If you have access to excess Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds, consider

earmarking a portion of those funds for projects explicitly benefitting vulnerable and marginalized communities. In addition to project fund set-asides, leverage Project Scoping/Advanced Assistance grant opportunities to support these communities. FEMA permits up to 25% of HMGP dollars in a single disaster to be [utilized for these activities](#).

■ Lower barriers to mitigation grants for low-resource, vulnerable and marginalized communities. This could be done through state match assistance or a county or statewide project development contract in which communities can buy in and receive mitigation grant application help for a lower price than they could alone. It could also be supported by using some of your state or local management costs to pay for staff to support application development in low-resource communities.

■ Implement a consistent way to review applications and helps identify those that live up to your equity goals. This could look like [California's Health Places Index](#) or [Deloitte's HealthPrism™](#) – tools that let you customize vulnerability models and identify those characteristics you are hoping to address through mitigation.

■ Leverage other programs, like state public works loan

programs, to provide matching dollars when other funds are not available.

Principle 3: Protect local values

Mitigation isn't just about protecting critical infrastructure (most of which is [privately owned](#)); it can focus also on protecting high-value community assets. These can be historic downtowns, parks, schools, community centers, trees, or even certain aspects of quality of life.

Actions

■ Leverage your preparedness and outreach activities to identify community values and assets. Then, look at threats to those values and assets and develop mitigation strategies to protect them. This method is called "Value Planning," and is a way to build community relationships while also leveraging the knowledge of your engineers and planners to actually design and build great projects.

Principle 4: Your program must bring together all levels of government

Break down barriers that make the state-local-federal relationship complex. Hazard mitigation grant programs should not be thought of as competitive. This is about identifying and

[continued on page 35](#)

Pathways to Equity in Disaster Resilience

[continued from page 34](#)

addressing the largest potential sources of loss within your community and programs should elevate the projects that do just that. This is why getting your prioritization/scoring method right is so important.

Actions

- Work with grants staff at the state and FEMA regional level to improve service and support to low-resource jurisdictions. Provide additional support to projects that are likely to be extremely beneficial to a vulnerable or marginalized community. Projects should not fail due to lack of local capability or understanding of these grant programs.
- Clearly identify and communicate the multiple benefits of proposed projects. Risk reduction alone may not be sufficient to secure local matching funds.

Principle 5: Make sure your mitigation plan is ready to serve as a foundational document

Your local or state hazard mitigation plan is where many mitigation program development efforts begin, results are stored, and opportunities identified. It,

therefore, must be a good plan, unifying all phases of emergency management, establishing priorities, identifying areas of risk and vulnerability, and building coalitions to implement strong mitigation strategies.

Actions

- Incorporate data into your hazard and vulnerability assessments at the appropriate scale. City-level risk assessments should be more granular than county, county than state, etc. Use local data on hazards, conditions, and vulnerability whenever possible since it is likely to be more accurate than national datasets.
- Your vulnerability assessment should identify relationships between hazards, vulnerability characteristics, and loss. This is like the link between old buildings and loss during earthquakes or between disability and difficulties heeding evacuation orders. The assessment should not use generic indices that obscure specific sources of vulnerability.
- Measure equity in your plan, including both vulnerability (likelihood of loss) and who benefits from proposed projects.

Principle 6: The projects you need are probably not in the capital improvements plan

By definition, underrepresented

or marginalized communities are underrepresented and marginalized. New ideas and relationships may be necessary to find the projects most likely to make a difference.

Actions

- Engage organizations and marginalized communities to understand their capabilities, gaps, and values. Work with them to find mitigation projects that can protect their values, strengthen their capabilities, and bridge their gaps. This could be improvements that prevent a road from frequently flooding or streetscapes and an incentive program to plant trees, paint roofs white, and reduce the urban heat island effect.
- Consider providing direct assistance to empower communities with the capabilities necessary to identify, champion, and execute on these projects. Enable communities to explore the design and assessment of alternative approaches to address their risk and resilience.

A hazard mitigation program built on the principles discussed here can help move your community in the direction of resilience, sustainability and equitable access to the benefits of both. How your program is assembled may

[continued on page 39](#)

Partnering with Your Local Health and Human Service Entities Could Lead to Equity in Recovery

By Lisa D. Swanson MPA

On Behalf of IAEM Diversity Committee

Emergency Managers should partner with their community health and human service entities when assessing community and environmental threats and risks. Doing so, emergency managers could lead the groundwork necessary for equity in recovery and support building resilient infrastructure and communities.

Share Responsibility

FEMA has recognized that preparedness is a shared responsibility. Preparedness calls for the involvement of everyone – not just the government – in these efforts.

By working together, emergency managers can help keep safe from harm and be more resilient when struck by hazards, such as natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and pandemics.

The term “[Whole Community](#)” appears quite often in preparedness materials. Whole community, in the context of emergency preparedness and response, “attempts to engage the full capacity of the private and nonprofit sectors, including businesses, faith-based and

disability organizations, and the general public; in conjunction with the participation of local, tribal, state, and the federal government.” Planning for Health and Human services in disasters or emergency events must be based on a whole community perspective.

The White House, Congress, and federal agencies are taking sweeping steps to improve the safety, provide protection, and level the ground for historically disenfranchised people and communities. Through these efforts, challenges and gaps have been identified. These realizations include the wide regional variance in emergency preparedness for children, the need for increased coordination between governmental and non-governmental entities, and the local gaps in capacity [to meet the needs of children in disasters](#).

Health and human service entities are the organizations that come face-to-face with underserved and marginalized neighborhoods, provide services such as counseling, foster care, elder care, substance abuse prevention, after-school programs, job training, vocational rehabilita-

tion, information, and referral services. These organizations give people facing tough times hope, help, reliability, and support for improved conditions.

Individuals and families’ self-sufficiency, quality of life and the viability of whole neighborhoods and communities depend upon social connectedness – by statute, regulations and executive orders. By law, local social services departments are responsible to aid, care and support the needy.

For example, New York State (NYS), Article XVII of the New York State Constitution, established that “the aid, care and support of the needy are public concerns” and will be provided for by the state. To fulfill this mandate, NYS Social Services Law establishes a state-supervised, locally-administered social services system. Even programs of assistance established by the federal government are carried out under state supervision by the 58 local social service districts (LDSS) in New York State.

Most, but not all, mandates for the provision of social services

[continued on page 37](#)

Partnering with Local Health and Human Service Entities

[continued from page 36](#)

will require financial participation by LDSS and can be found in Title 18 of New York State Codes, Rules and Regulations (NYCRR). Each social services district has a vested financial interest in maintaining the integrity of their social services program.

Health and human service entities are driven to achieving government and non-governmental business goals by mitigating the risk associated with achieving mandates and operational goals of government and non-government entities before, during, and post disaster incidents. This includes risk to the local economy, risk associated with their equities and pre-disaster vulnerable populations, and when health and human and social service organizations and their programs have no countermeasures to natural and manmade hazards.

Holistic Mitigation Planning

Health and human service organizations mitigate family and community crises daily. They develop plans, and provide referrals and resources. At-risk populations that are most susceptible to the impacts of disasters, gaps in capabilities, and limited or no ac-

cess to resources are typically already connected to public health, health and human, and social service organizations. The impact of natural disasters impacts the economic and social well-being of children, families, individuals, and communities where our public health, health and human, and social service entities already have a bonafide and long stem leadership role, resources, and access to current data.

These essential services must continue with minimal to no disruption in communities of [low socioeconomic status](#). If disrupted, the cascading effect would be financially devastating for residents and the local economy.

Disasters damage and disrupt social networks that vulnerable individuals and families rely on for protection and survival. Loss of housing, loss of income, food insecurity, disconnected social networks – as well as being affected by a hurricane, pandemic, fire, or mass fatality – can place communities at even greater risk and recidivism, if equity in recovery is not given.

A PEW Charitable Trust Study reported that since October 8, 2019, weather and climate incidents/events have resulted in losses of billions of dollars. [Approximately 60% of households will experience a form of economic shock](#). According

to the [Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2017](#), four-in-10 adults couldn't cover an unexpected \$400 expense without selling something or borrowing money, living paycheck-to-paycheck.

Emergency managers are faced with responding to the destruction of communities from the next virus, disaster, environmental catastrophe, social justice issue, or death from the hands of another. The effect these incidents and events have on communities can include loss of housing, loss of income, food insecurity and disconnected social networks. Times of peril often lead to exposing community gaps and exacerbating weakness.

For example, women, men, and children living in a violent relationship before the disaster may experience violence of increased severity post-disaster. They may be separated from family, friends, and other support systems that previously offered them some measure of protection. Emergency managers sometimes overlook the signs of domestic violence when planning for residents.

Survivors of domestic violence may not receive or have limited access to the protective support and resources needed. Because of their unstable situ-

[continued on page 38](#)

Partnering with Local Health and Human Service Entities

[continued from page 37](#)

ation, the emergency manager may not know how to look for the indicators or where to obtain resources at the time it's needed.

In another example, emergency managers sometimes overlook the signs of domestic violence, human trafficking, child abuse and neglect, and homelessness among other community needs when planning for residents. They may not be fully aware of how disaster assistance intersects with health and human-based services during disaster incidents and recovery. Survivors may not receive or may have limited access to the protective, financial and emotional support and resources they need because of their unstable situation if emergency managers are siloed.

Disasters could affect human trafficking victims if they are displaced from a safe place or their services are disrupted. [Human trafficking is a pandemic that affects individuals, families and entire communities](#), across generations, continents and disasters. [Human trafficking victims are vulnerable](#) to exploitation by force, fraud or coercion to perform commercial sex or work.

While human trafficking spans all demographics, some circumstances or vulnerabilities lead to a higher susceptibility to victimization. Emergency managers aren't prepared to understand the signs and symptoms of a victim of human trafficking. Because of that, the likelihood of it increases and unwittingly emergency managers may perpetuate the risk of occurrences. Health and human service entities are already doing direct service work with these populations, in these areas, including marginalized communities where many seek refuge and access to cultural retention.

The focus of resilience needs to shift from post-disaster recovery to pre-disaster preparedness in time and resources. As an emergency manager, you can encourage community mitigation that is driven by outcome-oriented solutions, which reduce the burden to jurisdictions through collaborations with community-based health and human service organizations. Also, you could gain access to information-sharing opportunities and grow diversity and inclusion of thoughts, ideas, innovation, and experiences with the people needed to support vulnerable communities and populations.

Moreover, it could frame and establish the infrastructure

required to holistically examine children in disasters, disaster displaced populations, disaster health and human services at large, and improve interoperability through research, information sharing, stakeholder engagement and coalition building; and give equity to those who deserve it.

In conclusion

Emergency managers have been stretched far and wide over the past five years. The past two years has exposed gaps in how and who emergency managers plan for and support. Many emergency managers will stretch and do more. In either case, emergency managers should identify and build partnerships with health and human service organizations.

It is important for emergency managers to know and understand a community's demographic they are planning to support. Meaningful partnerships can assist by understanding the community's demographics, especially when emergency managers are faced with responding to 21st century threats/risks, the next virus, disaster, environmental catastrophe, social justice issues, or death from the hands of another.

Bridging the divide between

[continued on page 39](#)

Pathways to Equity in Disaster Resilience

[continued from page 35](#)

differ, but it should focus on investing in mitigation that benefits those most likely to suffer losses and recover slowly from disasters communities may face. ▲

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The Emotional Work of a Ph.D.

[continued from page 29](#)

would speak for those who could not speak for themselves, and I will continue to write about these experiences from a place of growth and a desire for change. There are many students and professionals around the world who cannot speak their truth without consequences.

Lastly, I am not entirely free

of retribution. I am still slowly working on my dissertation proposal now and hope to be done with it in the next year. The political fallout for a doctoral student can be terrible, but I feel so strongly about speaking out anyway.

I thank you for sticking with me. Stay tuned for more. ▲

Editor’s note: This article was previously published on May 12, 2021, in the author’s blog, [Travels with Leenamama](#).

Partnering with Local Health and Human Service Entities

[continued from page 38](#)

emergency management and health and human services affords an opportunity to share, use different perspectives, establish inroads, build trusted relationships and a diversity of backgrounds to accomplish the goal of equity in recovery. Emergency managers can be better – and now is the opportunity for emergency managers to be intentional, systematically identify, foster, and build trusting relationships with

local health and human service entities.

Human and social service entities are the pulse point of the community. They are information gateways that can go beyond quantifying data. They have the ear of the community. Moreover, they could tell the qualitative data stories that show and support the social return on investment in building resilient infrastructure and communities by shifting focus from post-disaster recovery to pre-disaster preparedness in time and resources. ▲

Looking Back to Look Ahead



**Grand Rapids, Michigan
October 15-22, 2021**

Diversifying Emergency Management by Addressing Inequities

By Hieu Vo, Consultant, Constant Associates,
and Gina Apruzzese, Analyst, Constant Associates

Emergency management has been experiencing a slow and steady evolution in terms of its workforce and approach to diversity. At its core, it has responded and adapted to the changing world of increasingly complex emergencies.

Despite our best efforts to respond in ways that are equitable and comprehensive, emergency management continues to suffer from the inequities that exist in its workforce and service approaches.¹

For example, rural and low-income communities often have less access to resources and information, and continue to experience gaps in services based on traditional emergency management approaches.² With little representation from these communities in the field of traditional emergency management, this leads to less advocacy for resources that could be imperative for these populations during response.³

There is a need for our industry to rapidly evolve and reflect the diverse communities it serves.

Although the field of emergency management is diversifying, it is still largely a homogenous industry. In recent years, organizations have been eager to prove their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives through several different innovative and experimental methods. Increasing representation within the field of emergency management helps expand the lenses by which we think about emergency preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery, and the entire community served.

Challenges facing emergency management

As seen with the COVID-19 pandemic, the prolonged response has exposed institutional barriers that have prevented communities of diverse populations from receiving care, support

and resources during disasters.⁴ Marginalized communities are often hardest hit in disasters and emergencies because of lingering systemic barriers and prejudices. As the industry moves into further diversification, we should collectively assess what current barriers exist that could prevent further diversification, which include:

The current demographics in emergency management are largely homogenous, with only 44% of FEMA employees, for example, identifying as people of color or minorities.⁵ This does not reflect the public it serves. An industry that reflects the public it serves during its most pressing time is the most effective and impactful. By not representing that, it could discourage future professionals who are interested in pursuing a career in emergency management.

Current emergency management services and operations

[continued on page 41](#)

¹ Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management. "Embed Equity in Disaster Response, Experts Say." 2020.

² Urban Institute. "Insult to Injury: Natural Disasters and Residents' Financial Health." 2019.

³ Center of Excellence Homeland Security Emergency Management. "Diversity in Emergency Management: How it needs to become the New Normal." 2021.

⁴ Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management. "COVID-19 and The African American Community." 2020.

⁵ Scientific American. "Disaster Management Is Too White, Official Tells Congress." 2020.

Diversifying Emergency Management by Addressing Inequities

[continued from page 40](#)

do not fit or reflect the needs of the diverse community. Studies show that diverse communities often receive less disaster aid and are affected disproportionately to their counterparts.⁶

These are a result of systemic barriers both in society and emergency management. When unaddressed, this only creates more inequities with decision making that do not truly reflect or serve the community.

There are few positions of leadership and decision making in emergency management for people of color and minorities. While representation in the frontline is important, it is equally significant for the top level to be diverse and rich in experience, expertise, and background.⁷

The lack of diversity at the top level could diminish effective change necessary for vulnerable communities to receive equitable care and representation during emergencies.

Improving diversity, addressing inequities

To encourage changes in the system, the industry can begin to implement effective measures that can breakdown these barriers. Here are a few take-aways emergency management can use to begin to diversify and address inequities within their own departments and organizations:

Regularly invest in cultural competency training for all professionals. For emergency management to reflect the communities it serves, it requires professionals to understand the cultural nuances of minority populations. Educating and training professionals in cultural competency, specifically the cultures of the communities they serve, can help provide more equitable service for individuals during emergencies.⁸

This includes training on disabilities and access and functional needs, or communicating and engaging with vulnerable communities. As our society evolves, it is important to continue to revisit these trainings for new issues, developments and gaps in the community

that need to be considered in future emergency management efforts.

Provide meaningful training and job opportunities to young professionals. With the increase in emergency management degree programs, there is a growing number of young professionals interested in breaking into the field.⁹ Emergency management professionals should consider providing a training program or formal pipeline to attract and retain candidates. This could include recruitment from related degree programs, encouraging involvement in active response through volunteer work, and various mentorship programs. Younger candidates can bring perspectives that will make emergency response more effective, inclusive, and successful.

Focus on candidates with diverse backgrounds to represent the communities emergency management serves. Current demographics indicate a largely homogenous industry, which has excluded people of color, minorities and women.¹⁰ By increasing representation,

[continued on page 42](#)

⁶ Urban Institute. "Insult to Injury: Natural Disasters and Residents' Financial Health." 2019.

⁷ Scientific American. "Disaster Management Is Too White, Official Tells Congress." 2020.

⁸ Center of Excellence Homeland Security Emergency Management. "Diversity in Emergency Management: How it needs to become the New Normal." 2021.

⁹ Government Technology. "UCF Emergency Management Degree Programs Evolve with the Times." 2019.

¹⁰ Government Technology. "Emergency Management Profession Needs Diversity to Adapt." 2021.

Diversifying Emergency Management by Addressing Inequities
[continued from page 41](#)

emergency management services and operations can be implemented by people who can empathize or have had experiences with vulnerable communities.¹¹

Consider partnering with organizations and associations that represent the interests of diverse populations for guidance on how to implement more culturally competent programs. Whole community engagement, disability and access and functional needs planning, and responding to the needs of rural populations, frequent challenges in emergency response, could improve with more representation in experiences, expertise, and backgrounds.

Provide more leadership and decision-making opportunities to professionals of diverse backgrounds. Currently, individuals with diverse backgrounds are often clustered together in the frontline or individual contributing positions.¹² While these individuals could represent the community in direct

By investing in professional development for people of color, minorities and women, it could significantly increase representation in leadership and subsequently enact better plans, policies and procedures that serve vulnerable communities.

engagement or interactions, this can limit important decision making if the top level is not equitably represented.¹³

Mentorship programs that provide a pipeline to leadership roles can help bring nuanced perspectives in emergency management decision making. By investing in professional development for people of color, minorities, and women, it could significantly increase representation in leadership and subsequently enact better plans, policies, and procedures that serve vulnerable communities.

Conclusion

Serving our communities

during emergencies remains a critical function of our role as emergency managers. Though racial and gender diversity has improved in emergency management in recent years, some communities, such as those with disabilities or others with access or functional needs as well as Native American populations, still largely remain underrepresented in the field overall, to name just a few.

In order to meet their needs, our industry must address the systemic and structural inequities that have contributed to the disproportionate impact on people of color and minorities during disasters. Our work to diversify emergency management should address employment, training, policy, procedural, and systemic barriers.

From investment in sustainable recruitment, impactful training and development and policy changes, these efforts can make a difference not only in our field, but to the communities we serve. The mission of emergency management cannot fully be met until there is accurate representation on the inside. ▲

¹¹ Center of Excellence Homeland Security Emergency Management. "Diversity in Emergency Management: How it needs to become the New Normal." 2021.

¹² Scientific American. "Disaster Management Is Too White, Official Tells Congress." 2020.

Center of Excellence Homeland Security Emergency Management. "Diversity in Emergency Management: How it needs to become the New Normal." 2021.

EM Calendar

Visit www.iaem.org/calendar for details on these and other events.

- Aug. 18-19 Asia Risk & Resilience Conference 2021 (Hybrid Event) – IAEM Sponsored Event. IAEM members receive a 30% discount when they use IAEM30 during registration.
- Aug. 30-Sept. 2 2021 National Homeland Security Conference, MGM Grand, Las Vegas, NV.
- Aug. 31-Sept. 2 North Dakota Emergency Management Association Annual Conference, Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck, ND.
- Sept. *(Multiple dates throughout month)*
EMAP Virtual Cohort Training
- Sept. 15-17 ResCon International, New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, New Orleans, LA.
- Sept. 19-22 22nd Annual New Jersey Emergency Preparedness Conference, Harrah's Waterfront Conference Center, Atlantic City, New Jersey.
- October 15-22 **IAEM 2021 Annual Conference & EMEX: Looking Back to Look Ahead, Grand Rapids, MI.**
See latest IAEM Annual Conference Updates details on page 1.

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New IAEM Members: Apr. 16-May 15, 2021

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[continued on page 45](#)

New IAEM Members: Apr. 16-May 15, 2021

New Member Listing

[continued from page 44](#)

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[continued from page 45](#)

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The *IAEM Bulletin*, the official newsletter of the International Association of Emergency Managers, is published monthly by IAEM to keep members abreast of association news, government actions affecting emergency management, research, and information sources.

The publication also is intended to serve as a way for emergency managers to exchange information on programs and ideas. Issues from the past five years through the present are available in the members-only [IAEM Bulletin Archives](#). Older issues can be requested from staff.

The Bulletin is distributed electronically via the members-only archives to emergency management officials each month, representing all levels of government, industrial, commercial, educational, military, private, nonprofit, and volunteer organizations.

Publishing an article in the IAEM Bulletin may help you to meet IAEM’s certification requirements. If you haven’t written an article lately, or at all, for the IAEM Bulletin, check out the [author’s guidelines](#).

Articles should be submitted to Bulletin Editor John Osborne via email at john@iaem.com.

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