



Unheard Distress: The Rural and Remote Experience

Presented by: **Kendra Pospychalla, CEM**, Director of Disaster Solutions for the Rural Division, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

Presentation Abstract: Rural America is faced with unique challenges and opportunities regarding disasters. Due to greater populations and financial investments into the built environment and infrastructure, loss is greater in urban areas as defined by property. However, comparative impacts are worse in rural communities. Communities located in remote geographies are even further disadvantaged from support.

This session will discuss the everyday vulnerabilities of rural and remote communities and how they unfold into exceptional challenges upon a disaster. Emphasizing on the frequently neglected role of small businesses, the discussion will address all elements of community and economic development. Further, it will briefly highlight how current approaches and structures of disaster management do not address these rural dynamics.

Speaker Bio: Kendra Pospychalla is a US Marine Corps veteran with over a decade of experience in disaster management and six years in finance and business development. She is a Certified Emergency Manager and holds a M.S. in Disaster Science and Management from the University of Delaware. She began her work in disaster relief as an AmeriCorps VISTA assigned with the American Red Cross in Los Angeles where she

went on to work in various positions for the American Red Cross, Team Rubicon and other nongovernmental organizations involved in disasters. She has had particular emphasis in designing disaster-related service programs and developing disaster response plans for international and domestic contexts, urban and rural, government and nongovernment. In addition to personally responding to more than 50 home fires to provide immediate assistance to families, she has served in support and NGO leadership roles in countless larger disasters throughout the country including Superstorm Sandy; Hurricanes Isaac, Irma, and Dora; the 2014 Oso, WA mudslide; the 2013 LAX Shooting, and the Valley Fire in Middletown, CA. Currently, Kendra works at the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) as the director of disaster solutions for the rural division. She leads various projects assisting local, rural governments and tribes recovering from disasters in their efforts to build their capacity, use CDBG-DR funds, and address development challenges as part of HUD's Distressed Cities and Persistent Poverty Technical Assistance (DCTA) Program and Office of Native American Programs Technical Assistance (ONAP).