

Mary Ellen Carroll

Executive Director

San Francisco Department of Emergency Management

Mary Ellen Carroll was appointed Executive Director of the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management (DEM) in August 2018. Carroll oversees a department of more than 300 employees responsible for leading San Francisco in planning preparedness, communications, response, and recovery for daily emergencies, large-scale City-wide events, and major disasters.

Carroll brings 30 years of experience in local public service to DEM. She began working for the City of San Francisco in 2005 at the Department of Public Health, where she led planning and coordination efforts for San Francisco's health systems. She then spent several years working in the Controller's Office developing business continuity plans for critical City services and City-wide plans for state and federal cost recovery activities to ensure rapid disaster recovery and reimbursement. After that, Carroll served as the Director of Emergency Planning and Security for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission for almost eight years where she led all security and emergency management operations related to water, power, sewer, and other critical local utilities infrastructure.

San Francisco has experienced and will continue to face unprecedented crises including extreme weather caused by climate change, social unrest, widespread infrastructure and supply chain failures, behavioral health concerns, and community inequities. Since becoming DEM Executive Director, Carroll has overseen numerous mayoral declared emergencies, including the Kincade Fire in 2019 when San Francisco opened a mass evacuation shelter, COVID-19 pandemic response, the Tenderloin Emergency Initiative, and the 2022-23 Early Winter Storms.

Being a woman in emergency management is not common, especially being the executive director of an emergency management department for a major metropolitan city. Because of this, Carroll focuses on mentoring others to make the field more diverse and values problem-solving, relationship building, and finding creative solutions to manage complex emergency incidents most effectively.

Carroll holds a Bachelor's Degree in International Studies from George Washington University and a Master's Degree in Urban Studies from Virginia Tech.