



Bulletin

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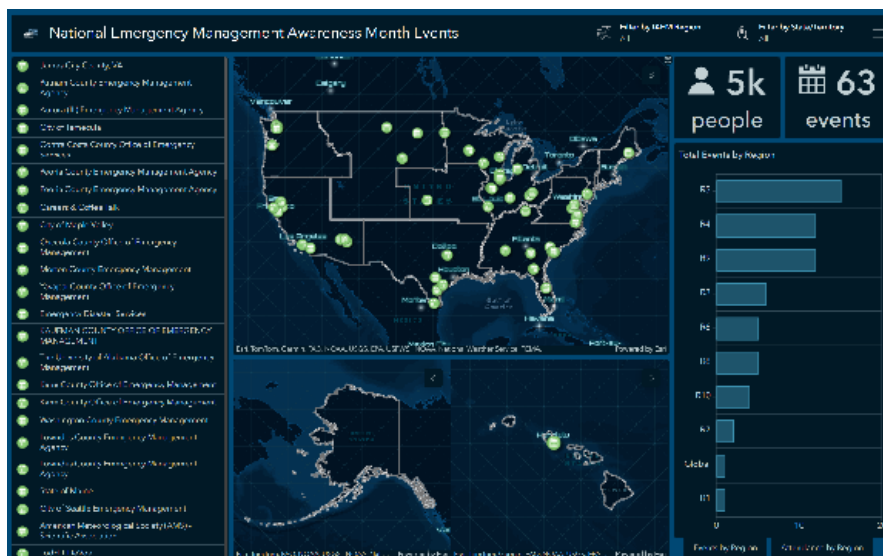


A Call to Action: August 2025 Marks the Inaugural National Emergency Management Awareness Month

IAEM is proud to announce that August 2025 is the inaugural [National Emergency Management Awareness Month](#). As many of you are aware, and have already been engaged, this initiative, launched through the collaborative efforts of the IAEM-USA's Community and Member Engagement (CMEC) and Government Affairs (GAC) Committees, was designed as an [industry-wide, coordinated awareness and advocacy campaign](#).

Why This Month Matters

Emergency management is foundational to building resilient communities—helping organizations and governments prepare for, respond to, recover from, and adapt to emergencies. This awareness month invites professionals across all sectors to highlight their vital role and bring visibility to their contributions before National Preparedness Month in September.



The IAEM membership has been hard at work during the inaugural National Emergency Management Awareness Month. The map shows the various events and activities which have been executed by emergency managers around the country. [Submit your event using the submission form.](#)

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National Emergency Management Awareness Month

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How IAEM Members Can Get Involved

IAEM is providing a [suite of tools and resources](#) to empower members' engagement throughout the month:

■ **Campaign Materials:** Access social media toolkits, sample resolutions, email templates, guidance on engagement strategies, and more.

■ **Outreach Ideas:** Consider these creative options for raising awareness:

- Present at a community board or local government meeting.
- Invite elected officials to exercises or to tour your Emergency Operations Center.
- Share insights with your local media.

• Publish opinion pieces to articulate the importance of emergency management.

• Engage local schools through presentations or artistic campaigns.

■ **Webinar Resource:** [View the informational webinar](#) featuring IAEM-USA leadership—including IAEM-USA President Carrie Speranza, GAC Chair Mary Jo Flynn-Nevoins, and IAEM Government Affairs Director Thad Huguley—moderated by 2nd Vice President Todd DeVoe. The discussion covers the purpose of Awareness Month and effective engagement strategies.

Share Your Work — Complete the Event Survey

IAEM invites members to [register each planned or completed activity via the event/activity survey](#). Whether submitting a proclamation, media campaign, meeting with leaders,

social media outreach, or educational event—your efforts matter. You may return to the survey as needed to add further entries.

Additionally, IAEM is gathering member stories through the Member Highlight Campaign Survey—stories selected may be featured on IAEM's communications platforms throughout August.

A Final Word to IAEM Members

August 2025 presents a historic opportunity to elevate the profession and demonstrate the essential work of emergency managers. We urge you to take full advantage of IAEM's resources, amplify your outreach, complete the event and highlight surveys—and help set the foundation for sustained recognition of the emergency management field.

Together, let us show how planning, preparedness, and proactive leadership make communities safer and stronger. ♦

GET TO KNOW THE: IAEM-USA Community and Member Engagement Committee

The Community and Member Engagement Committee (CMEC) drives strategic, operational, and tactical initiatives to engage with IAEM members and elevate and amplify the profile of emergency management.

Recent key initiatives/activities this committee has led:

- Established in 2025 to advance IAEM priorities and collaboration.
- Launched initiative for National Emergency Management Awareness Month focused on outreach, education, and resources.
- Continually partner with the Government Affairs Committee on unified guidance and advocacy for disaster legislation.

Interested in joining?

We meet on the first Thursday of each month at 4:00 p.m. ET.

If you would like to join, please contact:

- Zach Stanford, Committee Chair
◦ CommunityMemberEngagement@iaem.com
- Dawn Shiley, CAE, Staff Liaison
◦ dawn@iaem.com



Candidate Statement by Mary Jo Flynn-Nevins, CEM, Running for IAEM-USA Second Vice President

FlynnM@saccounty.gov

I am Mary Jo Flynn-Nevins, and I am running for Second Vice President. I am a seasoned emergency management leader with a clear and compelling vision: to build an inclusive, transparent, and collaborative professional community where every member feels empowered to contribute. With over 20 years of emergency management experience, including my current role as Chief of Emergency Services for Sacramento County, I have led responses to floods, wildfires, civil unrest, and pandemics, earning national recognition and multiple awards for my leadership. My campaign for Second Vice President of IAEM emphasizes three core areas:

- Policy advocacy. Connecting IAEM members and thoughtfully advocating for critical policy changes that benefit our membership and our communities.

- Innovation. A commitment to ensure IAEM is fostering and developing member capabilities regard-

ing technology and being a leading innovator.

- Elevating the profession. Advocating for enhanced standards that elevate our commitment to one another in our network and our profession.

Backed by my deep involvement in IAEM as Chair of Government Affairs and as past Chair of the Emerging Technology Caucus I am committed to continue serving the organization. I am a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) and a trusted voice in the field, known for my integrity and commitment to advancing emergency management standards. I believe that active participation strengthens the organization, and I pledge to ensure every member has access and opportunity to make a meaningful impact. My values center on collaboration, transparency, and advocating for member needs, while my background in government affairs and emerging technologies



Mary Jo Flynn-Nevins, CEM

equips me to lead with insight and integrity.

I am committed to fostering meaningful connections and. I invite members to join me in creating a stronger, more dynamic future together by visiting www.mjfor2vp.com and voting for me as Second Vice President. ♦



GET TO KNOW THE:

IAEM-USA Government Affairs Committee

The IAEM-USA Government Affairs Committee monitors and coordinates political and policy developments to keep members informed and engaged on legislative and regulatory processes that affect the emergency management profession.

Recent key initiatives/activities this committee has led:

- Led major initiatives including two recent Day on the Hill visits, congressional testimony, topical webinars, and member forums to advance policy and advocacy.
- Hosted an open forum with 370+ participants, offering key updates and insights on FEMA's evolving changes.
- Collaborated on the inaugural National Emergency Management Awareness Month to expand outreach and visibility.

Interested in joining?

Our group meets the first Tuesday of each month, with adjustments as needed for Capitol Hill activities.

If you would like to join, please contact:

- MaryJo Flynn-Nevins, CEM, Committee Chair
• GovAffairs@iaem.com
- Thad Huguley, IAEM Gov Affairs Director & Staff Liaison
• thad@iaem.com

Candidate Statement by David Muse, MPA, CEM, MEP, Running for IAEM-USA Second Vice President

davidmusejr@gmail.com

It is with deep appreciation for our profession and our commitment to our shared future that I request your vote for IAEM 2nd Vice President.

Over the past 15 years, I've served across various sectors of emergency management, including higher education, healthcare, the private sector, government, and nonprofit organizations. I've had the privilege of managing large-scale operations and leading quiet moments of community recovery. I've built teams, supported colleagues, and strengthened systems because that's what emergency managers do.

Today, I serve as the Assistant Director of Emergency Management at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. My previous roles with Mass General Brigham, Mass Emergency Management Agency, State Street, and the American Red Cross have allowed me to lead all phases of emergency management at every level, from the EOC to the boardroom.

As a long-time IAEM volunteer, I have proudly served in a leadership role for the past four years, two of which I served as the Region 1 Vice President and am now Region 1 President. These roles have given me the honor of representing New England's dedicated professionals and have afforded me a seat on the IAEM-USA Board of Directors for the past two years. I've worked alongside national leadership to improve member value, strengthen our regions, and support strategic priorities for our organization.

My platform is grounded in three pillars, shaped by experience and focused on action:

1. Strengthen IAEM as an Organization.

IAEM's strength lies in its members, and we owe it to each other to build a stronger, more efficient, and more inclusive organization. As a leader who has managed both paid and volunteer teams, I understand the

importance of transparent systems, responsive leadership, and accessible opportunities. Learn more about my thoughts in this LinkedIn Article titled *A Stronger IAEM: Strengthening Our Organization*.

With your help, we will:

- Promote operational efficiency and clarity in IAEM's governance and processes.

- Enhance transparency around decision-making, finances, and strategic goals.

- Invest in tools and practices that enable members to engage meaningfully at regional, national, and international levels.

- Champion the development of IAEM's next strategic plan and help guide our direction beyond 2026.

2. Advance Professional Development & Credentialing.

Professional development is not one-size-fits-all. I will advocate for flexible and equitable growth opportunities, from student pathways to advanced credentialing.

Together we will:

- Advocate for modernization of the CEM®/AEM® programs and support the exploration of advanced credentialing (reference my LinkedIn Article titled *It's Time to Specialize: Reimagining the CEM for Today's Diverse Emergency Managers*), furthering our profession and offering mid and senior-level emergency managers the opportunity to advance their credentials from within our organization.

- Build partnerships with academic and training institutions to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice.

3. Redefine Emergency Management as an Organizational Imperative.

Emergency management is a strategic function predicated on readiness, problem solving, networking, continuity, and leadership. It's time our profession is seen and treated that way.



David Muse, MPA, CEM, MEP

As an organization, we will:

- Help elevate EM visibility in emerging industries.

- Advocate for EM professionals to have a seat at the leadership table, before, during, and after a crisis.

Continue to build relationships and work with new groups and organizations to strengthen partnerships and build EM's reputation.

- Support those serving in collateral EM roles with tools, training, and community.

IAEM is at a pivotal moment. We need fresh ideas, proven leadership, and someone with firsthand experience of how the USA Board operates. I offer these skills and would be honored to serve as your next 2nd Vice President.

Let's move IAEM forward, together! ♦

Get to Know Your IAEM Leadership

IAEM-USA Region 9 President

**Jon Shear, CEM,
IAEM-USA Region 9 President**

In an effort to introduce the IAEM leadership to members and recognize their hard work for the organization, the IAEM Bulletin will be providing profiles on the current IAEM leadership throughout the year. A heartfelt thanks to our volunteers whose hard work makes IAEM successful.

Jon currently resides in Honolulu, Hawaii, and has been an IAEM member for 15 years.

You can connect with Jon on [LinkedIn](#) or email him at USARegion9President@iaem.com.

■ **Biographical sketch:** Jon is the CEO of ReadyZoneHQ. He is a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM), a member of the IAEM Conference Committee and Emerging Technology Caucus, and a past president of the Emergency Management Professionals of Hawaii. He began his career in the Army where he was certified as a hazmat and explosive ordnance disposal technician, and commanded a response team that responded to hazardous incidents throughout the world. He has over 30 years of emergency management experience and supported the National Preparedness Task Force at DHS HQ, as well as national level continuity of government programs at FEMA HQ. He has led numerous planning efforts at the national level to include planning for several National Special Security Events, and the DHS and DOT Pandemic Influenza response plans. He has led emergency management projects in twelve countries, dozens of United States cities in 30 states, Washington D.C., and three territories, as well as at Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and joint military installations.

■ **What professional accomplishment or experience are you most proud of and/or learned the most from?**

In 2005 I responded to Hurricane Katrina in the Joint Field Office in Baton Rouge. I learned a tremendous amount about the importance of planning, training and exercises to prepare for disasters.

■ **What are you hoping to get out of being a part of the IAEM leadership team?**

Looking forward to the opportunity to work with our members and other leaders within IAEM to support the organization and the profession of emergency management.

■ **What country do you really want to visit?**

Greece.

■ **What is the most exciting thing you've ever done?**

Jumping out of a perfectly good aircraft.

■ **Reflecting on your career, what are some moments of pride that stand out to you?**

The response to COVID-19 required an incredible amount of coordination and effort among multiple agencies over an extended period of time. We were able to accomplish numerous efforts with limited resources to support the people of Hawaii.

■ **What is the hardest thing you've ever done?**

Getting through nine months of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) school when I was in the Army.



*Jon Shear, CEM,
IAEM-USA Region 9 President*

■ **If you didn't work in emergency management, what career would you pursue?**

Carpentry – I'm always amazed at what it's possible to build with the right materials and tools.

■ **If you could say one thing to all IAEM members, what would it be?**

Get involved – the more you participate, the more you get out of any organization you're in.

■ **Is there any advice or knowledge you would like to share with emerging professionals in the field?**

Ask lots of questions, and be persistent.

■ **Looking to the future, is there growth you would like to see in emergency management or IAEM?**

Would like to see every emergency manager in the country join IAEM from private sector, non-prof-

[continued on page 3](#)

IAEM-USA Region 9 President

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its, local, state and national levels of government.

■ **What is your favorite way to relax?**

Woodworking.

■ **What motto do you live by?**

Semper Gumby.

■ **What is your favorite restaurant?**

Himalayan Kitchen. ♦



WE'RE LOOKING FOR WRITERS

Write for the IAEM Bulletin

We invite you to submit an article for the IAEM Bulletin to share your insights and expertise with fellow emergency managers!

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The *IAEM Bulletin* 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. Past issues are available in the members-only [IAEM Bulletin Archives](#).

Publishing an article in the *IAEM Bulletin* may help you to meet IAEM's certification requirements. 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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IAEM in Action



The IAEM-USA Region 7 Pre-Conference Pickleball Bash at Chicken-N-Pickle! Emergency managers from across the region gathered for an energizing pre-conference event full of friendly competition, laughter, and camaraderie. From first-time players to seasoned pros, everyone enjoyed a spirited evening of pickleball, networking, and fun at Chicken-N-Pickle.



The IAEM-USA Region 7 Conference was a well-attended event that featured many expert-lead sessions and provided many opportunities for networking and improving the emergency management profession.

IAEM News to Know

Certification

■ **Ask Me Anything: IAEM Certification Q&A with a Commissioner**—Considering the AEM or CEM certification or have questions about recertification? Join IAEM for a live, interactive “Ask Me Anything” webinar with a Certification Commissioner on **Wednesday, August 20, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. EDT**. This session is your chance to gain insights into the certification process. So, gather your questions and [register here](#)—we’re ready to help you succeed!

New Certification Management Portal Development

- IAEM is developing a new Certification Management Portal to streamline the application process.
- Important Information regarding the transition:
 - The new portal is scheduled to launch this month for new applications. The current portal will remain open for existing applications.
 - If you have an open AEM, CEM, Lifetime, or Upgrade application, you have until Oct. 31, 2025, to submit your application in the current portal.
 - If you have an open recertification application, you have until Dec. 31, 2025, to submit your application in the current portal.
 - If you can't submit in the current portal by these dates, information from your application will need to be manually transferred to the new portal.
- Please contact albon@iaem.com with any questions.

Conference

- The IAEM Annual Conference Keeps Growing. Will You Be There? [Register Today!](#)
- Over the last decade, the IAEM Annual Conference & EMEX has continued to be the must-attend event for emergency management professionals, and the numbers prove it.
 - From 1,735 attendees in 2015 to a record-breaking 2,563 registrants in 2024, emergency managers are attending to network, hear from top-notch experts, and shape the future of our industry.
 - There is so much IAEM offers to maximize your time at the conference. All are included in your full conference registration:

- [Early Edition Speakers Series](#) (Tues. & Thurs. 10/14 – 11/6).
- [Pre-/post-conference training](#) (11/14 – 11/16 & 11/20 – 11/21).
- [Sunday Federal Update Series](#) (11/16).
- [Embark Career and Emerging Professionals' Day](#) (Sun. 11/16).
- [IAEM Career Workshop Spotlight session](#) (Tues. 11/18).
- [Sunday Welcome Party](#) (11/16).
- [Poster Showcase](#) (Tues. 11/18)
- [EMvision Talks](#) (Tues. 11/18).
- [EMEX Receptions, Breakfast and Lunches](#) (Mon. 11/16 – Wed. 11/19).
- [Wednesday Presidential Banquet and Awards](#) (11/19)
- Plus, numerous [plenary and breakout sessions](#) filled with top-notch experts in our field.

IAEM-USA Elections

- Deadline: Voting in IAEM-USA Council and Regional Officers elections closes **Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. EDT**. Information is on the [IAEM website](#).
- Candidate statements for national elections are available in this edition of the bulletin and on the website. You
- Contact [Rebecca Campbell](#) for questions or ballot links. Voting deadline is 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, Sep. 2, 2025. IAEM-USA members are encouraged to vote for their preferred officers.
- View the [IAEM-USA Candidates Forum](#). View the election pages to learn more:
 - [Region 1.](#)
 - [Region 2.](#)
 - [Region 3.](#)
 - [Region 4.](#)
 - [Region 5.](#)
 - [Region 6.](#)
 - [Region 7.](#)
 - [Region 8.](#)
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Submit an Article for the IAEM Bulletin

The IAEM Editorial Committee is currently accepting submissions for future editions of the IAEM Bulletin. Refer to the [Author Guidelines](#) for tips and techniques for successfully submitting your article for publication.

The primary focus of the IAEM Bulletin is local. We are looking for articles that provide information and insights useful to other practitioners, in government and private sectors, who are educated and trained professionals.

- **Article Format:** Word or text format (not PDF).
- **Word length:** 750 to 1,500 words.
- **Photos/graphics:** Image format (png, jpg).
- **Email article, photos, and graphics to:** [John Osborne](#).



GET TO KNOW THE:

IAEM-USA Conference Committee



The purpose of the IAEM Conference Committee is to plan, coordinate, and develop the IAEM's in-person and virtual conferences. The committee is responsible for all facets of the program, including topics, schedule, speakers, and coordination of any training, seminars, and networking opportunities offered in conjunction with the conference. The committee coordinates its activities with IAEM staff and the host jurisdiction.

Recent key initiatives/activities this committee has led:

1. The 2025 IAEM Plugged In Virtual Conference that was held earlier this year. On-demand content is available through December 2025.
2. We are continuing our planning efforts for the 73rd Annual Conference & EMEX. Register to join us from **November 14-20** in Louisville, Kentucky.

Interested in joining?

We welcome new members each November and December after the Annual Conference. Committee members must be IAEM members in good standing and participate year-round through calls, emails, and at the conference. Stay tuned for more details!

Want to learn more? Contact:

- Julie Husk, Staff Liaison
- julie@iaem.com

Fighting Fires with Data: How GIS Is Transforming Emergency Response and Recovery

By Ahmed Gharib Ibrahim Megahed, Geographic Information Systems Consultant

Fire emergencies have grown more complex and destructive due to rapid urbanization, aging infrastructure, and climate-driven wildfires. In this changing landscape, data-driven strategies are essential for saving lives and protecting property. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) offer fire services powerful tools to collect, visualize, and analyze spatial data in real time. This paper investigates the transformative role of GIS in firefighting, emphasizing its impact on emergency response and recovery phases. Whether routing fire trucks during an urban blaze or assessing wildfire damage, GIS enables responders to act faster, smarter, and more safely.

As fire threats intensify due to climate change and urban expansion, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have emerged as critical tools in firefighting. This research explores how GIS is transforming emergency response and recovery by enhancing risk mapping, optimizing resource deployment, and improving real-time decision making. From wildfire modeling to urban hydrant analysis, GIS provides actionable insights that increase operational efficiency, reduce loss, and save lives. Through real-world applications and a sample fire risk zone map, the study highlights how fire departments and emergency managers are harnessing spatial data to respond faster and recover smarter. GIS is no longer optional in modern firefighting—it is a strategic necessity.

GIS in Emergency Fire Response: Real-Time Situational Awareness

GIS integrates with 911 dispatch systems, Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), and live incident feeds to provide a real-time operational view. Fire commanders can monitor active fire zones, locate hydrants, assess wind direction, track deployed crews, and view road closures all from a centralized digital dashboard.

For example, during a multi-building fire in Philadelphia, GIS allowed emergency managers to reroute fire engines around blocked intersections and position aerial units near high-risk structures, shaving critical minutes off response time. Firefighters on the ground accessed mobile GIS devices to receive live updates, improving their safety and coordination.

Targeted Resource Deployment

GIS enables more strategic staging and deployment of firefighting resources. By analyzing historical fire data, land use, population density, and road access, departments can preposition assets in areas most likely to need them.

For example, the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) uses GIS to evaluate neighborhood-level call density and fire risk, ensuring balanced distribution of ladder and engine companies. In wildfire-prone regions, predictive GIS

models are used to stage backup crews before a fire even starts, reducing response time and increasing containment efficiency.

Enhanced Firefighter and Department Response

On the frontlines, GIS supports active firefighting by delivering crucial spatial information directly to crews. Mobile-enabled GIS applications show building footprints, hazardous material storage, floor plans, and utility shutoff points, all of which help firefighters make faster, safer decisions under pressure.

Departments also use GIS to coordinate mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions. Shared maps allow agencies to view real-time unit availability and resource gaps across city or state lines.

For example, in California's 2022 fire season, multiple departments used interoperable GIS platforms to

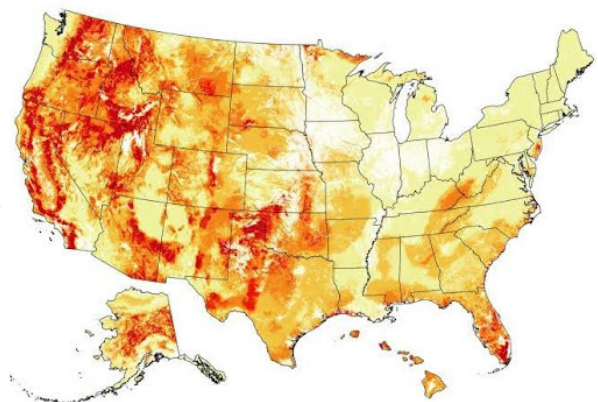


Figure 1. Wildfire hazard map of the United States. Areas in red represent regions of high fire risk due to vegetation, climate, and topography. The map reflects spatial data modeling commonly used in GIS-based fire risk assessment.

(Source: Wildfire Risk to Communities).

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A Solution for Local and State Governments? Disaster Funds and Assistance Programs

By Ai-Li Hollander, Fellow, King County Office of Emergency Management,
King County, Washington

Federal funding for disaster response and recovery is increasingly at risk as state and local governments are pushed to bear more of the burden and the future of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) appears uncertain. In turn, what can local and state governments do to prepare their budgets for disasters? Many governments maintain rainy day funds, give designated authorities the ability to move funds in the event of a disaster, and allow agencies to reallocate funds to cover disaster costs. Another method, establishing disaster funds and assistance programs, has attracted interest. This article outlines how federal funding makes state and local governments financially vulnerable and describes national trends in disaster funds and assistance programs. Establishing disaster funds and assistance programs can be an effective tool for state and local governments, but many jurisdictions face significant capacity challenges that hinder their ability to participate in or administer programs.

State and local governments rely heavily on FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) program, which reimburses local governments for at least 75% of response and recovery costs after a presidential disaster declaration. When a state declares an emergency and requests federal assistance, FEMA prepares a recommendation for the president that is informed by a combination of factors, including a comparison of a jurisdiction's estimated public sector costs and its Per Capita Impact (PCI) indicator. The PCI is an especially significant factor in presidential declarations, as 80% of

federally declared disasters between 2005 and 2014 met or exceeded their jurisdiction's PCI threshold. In April of 2025, the acting FEMA administrator reportedly sent a memo to the president recommending that the PCI be quadrupled. An analysis by the Urban Institute found that under this proposal, the number of qualified declared disasters would have been 71% less between 2008 and 2024. Meanwhile, Individual Assistance (IA), FEMA's program to help individuals with their immediate needs after a disaster, is difficult to access. Between 2020 and 2023, FEMA denied 38 percent of individual assistance requests from states. In an uncertain federal funding environment, local and state governments and their constituents appear increasingly financially vulnerable to disasters.

State and local governments can create disaster funds and assistance programs to weather the financial shock of disasters. Special, non-lapsing funds can pay for disaster response, recovery, and mitigation within the government entity that maintains the fund. In addition, funds can finance assistance programs that fill the gap between community need and federal funding availability by awarding money to individuals, local governments, and/or eligible non-profits. Funding mitigation projects before a disaster is a particularly effective cost-saving measure. According to a study by the National Institute of Building Sciences, federal mitigation grants save six dollars for every dollar spent. Different jurisdictions' assistance programs have unique designs and activation procedures, although most categorize eligible expenses using categories

from FEMA's PA and IA programs and the U.S. Small Business Administration's Disaster Assistance program. Creating an assistance program offers an opportunity for jurisdictions to address their community's unique needs and fill funding gaps for disasters that do not meet FEMA's PCI.

Funding for state disaster accounts and assistance programs comes from a variety of sources, including legislative or statutory appropriations, the general fund, and tax revenue sources. Funds are maintained through mechanisms including case-by-case legislative appropriations, minimum annual appropriation requirements, and maximum fund amount limits. Examples of special revenue sources include petroleum inspection fees, taxes on fireworks, and surcharges on property insurance. Many assistance programs are financed by dedicated special funds, while others rely on their state's legislature appropriating funds to a program when a disaster occurs.

DISCLAIMER

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Disaster Funds and Assistance Programs

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While a vast majority of state governments have disaster funds, the status of these programs varies. According to Pew's reporting on the 2018 fiscal year, 46 states had state-wide disaster accounts and 12 had multiple accounts. However, out of the 69 accounts listed in the report, Pew marks 26 accounts as "unfunded" or receiving zero appropriations at the start of 2018. More recently, a 2024 report from the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) notes that 47 states have disaster funds. Thirty-two states administer and fund their assistance programs, with 27 programs covering PA and 16 covering IA. Eight programs include funding for economic recovery, businesses, or other expanded forms of assistance. Of the programs listed, 18 are labeled as "currently unfunded" by NEMA.

Fewer cities and counties appear to maintain disaster funds and/or assistance programs. When these jurisdictions do establish disaster funds, their programs are often characterized by partnerships with nonprofits, solicitation of monetary donations, and dispersal of funds to individuals and/or Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs). However, funds that accept donations depend on developing relationships with nonprofits before a disaster and are limited by media coverage. One notable exception to the nonprofit-partnership mold is Cook County, Illinois, the second-largest county in the country. The county established a Disaster Response and Recovery Fund with an allocation of 100 million dollars in 2024, including 10 million towards future disasters. After severe storms in July of 2024, the fund was used to administer a 2.5-million-dollar PA-style assistance

program for impacted municipalities.

A major hurdle to state and local assistance programs is limited capacity to administer or participate in a program. In 2022, researchers at Headwaters Economics created a "Rural Capacity Map," approximating jurisdictions' expertise and staffing to apply for federal programs. Studying FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) awards, Headwaters Economics argued that funding was skewed towards coastal regions and higher-capacity, metropolitan communities. In 2018, the National Association of Counties conducted a survey and received responses from 397 counties, including large (>500,000 people), medium (50,000-500,000 people), and small (<50,000 people) counties. Large counties had an average of 9.57 full-time and 1.64 part-time employees, medium counties had an average of 3.48 full-time and 2.36 part-time employees, and small counties had an average of 1.14 full-time and 1.41 part-time employees. Small jurisdictions' limited staffing presents an obvious barrier to administering or participating in assistance programs. At the state level, agencies may be effective partners in program administration. At the county or city level, smaller jurisdictions' best option may be turning to partnerships with VOADs.

A 2024 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration report suggests that disasters are becoming more costly and frequent. Climate change worsens the severity of disasters while growth in population and wealth pushes development into hazard-prone areas. Shifting the burden of disaster costs away from the federal government creates direct incentives for local jurisdictions to establish more conservative building codes and invest in hazard mitigation. However, local and state governments do not appear prepared for

major shifts in federal government funding. State assistance programs offer a patchwork of coverage but have varied funding statuses. Meanwhile, counties of different sizes have varying capacities, which leads some to rely on nonprofits. In an uncertain federal funding environment, state and local governments must revisit their budgets and explore how they might creatively employ funds and assistance programs tailored to their community's needs.

References

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Fighting Fires with Data

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track wildfire spread, wind shifts, and responder movements across counties, leading to more efficient evacuations and reduced duplication of effort.

GIS in Fire Recovery and Assessment: Damage Assessment and Post-Incident Analysis

After a fire, GIS helps catalog damage by overlaying satellite imagery with structure data. This supports insurance claims, FEMA disaster declarations, and rebuilding priorities.

For example, after the Camp Fire in California, GIS was used to rapidly map destroyed homes, infrastructure losses, and displaced populations, helping recovery teams direct aid where it was needed most.

Identifying Vulnerable Populations

GIS plays a key role in protecting at-risk communities. By combining fire perimeters with demographic data, emergency teams can assess which groups such as elderly residents or non-English speakers need targeted recovery services.

GIS Tools and Techniques in Firefighting:

- Heat Mapping: Identifies zones with high fire incident frequency.

- Network Analysis: Optimizes routes to fire scenes based on current traffic conditions.

- Hydrant Layer Mapping: Locates nearest water access points for units.

- Fuel Load and Slope Models: Predicts wildfire spread and behavior.

- Smoke Dispersion Modeling: Forecasts air quality impacts for surrounding communities.

The Future of GIS in Fire Service

GIS is increasingly being integrated with drones, AI, and IoT sensors. For example:

- Drone + GIS: Aerial images feed directly into GIS to map wildfire perimeters.

- Smart Hydrants: GIS-enabled sensors monitor water pressure and availability.

- Public Dashboards: Residents can view live fire maps and evacuation zones.

Continued investment in GIS training, open source data, and interagency platforms will accelerate innovation across emergency services.

Conclusion

GIS is revolutionizing firefighting by making emergency response faster, smarter, and more efficient. It equips fire departments with tools to anticipate risk, manage crises in real time, and lead community recovery with precision. As disasters grow in frequency and intensity, GIS transforms from a helpful add-on into a mission-critical platform for emergency managers. For cities, states, and nations seeking resilient public safety systems, embracing GIS in firefighting is not just forward thinking—it's essential. ♦

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Twenty Years After Katrina: The Lessons We've Left Behind

By Eddie Minyard, CISM, CBCP, CRISC(ret), CMMC-RP, CHTI,
Emergency Management Director, Town of Bartlett, New Hampshire

As the powerful new documentary *Hurricane Katrina: Race Against Time* airs this season, it pulls us back into the floodwaters of 2005—not just to relive the storm, but to ask a pressing question: Have we truly learned anything?

I was there. Four days after Hurricane Katrina made landfall, I entered a city submerged in water and chaos. What I witnessed wasn't just a natural disaster—it was the complete failure of preparedness at every level. Communications collapsed. Evacuation plans fell apart. Relief efforts faltered. And the death toll—1,833 lives lost—was as much a failure of planning as it was a force of nature.

Now, twenty years later, I'm organizing a reunion of the team that lived through those harrowing sixteen months with me. People like Col. Terry Ebbert, then head of New Orleans Homeland Security, and Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, who led the military response that finally brought order, as well as the dozens of men and women from all over the United States who dropped everything to join me in that insane adventure.

New Orleans Was Unprepared— And They Knew It

Katrina didn't surprise anyone. We all saw it coming. The levees that failed had long been known to be inadequate. The communications systems that crumbled were already fragile. Evacuation plans existed only on paper. The lessons that should have been embraced as an outcome

of the Hurricane Pam Exercise — only one year earlier — were mostly ignored.

What made Katrina deadly wasn't just wind and water—it was the delusion that “someone else will handle it.” That mindset, more than anything, was the real catastrophe.

Inside the Hyatt Hotel, where I helped lead the city's emergency operations, we were coordinating relief efforts using satellite systems and other communications systems deployed by my “Team Unisys” cohort, because cell towers and land-line phone networks were gone. The Superdome and Convention Center descended into humanitarian nightmares. Supplies sat idle in warehouses. Buses were promised but came far too late. People died while waiting for them.

And yet, from that crucible came progress.

From Ashes, a Blueprint

In Katrina's wake, we built new systems: redundant communications, effective evacuation plans, hardened infrastructure. FEMA was overhauled through the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. And when Hurricane Gustav threatened in 2008, most of those improvements held. The City Assisted Evacuation Plan—one that my team helped develop—worked. We had learned—Or so we thought.

Today, those hard-won gains are eroding. FEMA faces budget cuts and staff shortages. Local emergency management agencies are losing funding. Climate-fueled disasters are becoming stronger and more fre-

quent—but the institutional memory is fading. Very few of the people making decisions today were there in 2005. They didn't see the floating bodies. They didn't coordinate logistics from the edge of collapse. They don't understand that disasters don't only create problems—they expose them.

Katrina Wasn't the Exception— It was the Warning

From wildfires in California to floods in Texas to rising seas in Florida, the threats are no longer distant. They're national. And as *Race Against Time* reminds us, Katrina was more than a tragedy—it was a test we failed—and may be doomed to fail again.

The communications systems my team developed and deployed—originally dismissed as “too expensive”—proved their worth in real time. But most communities still lack such capacity. Even now, we're patching gaps with hope instead of hardware. That's sad, because the costs of solutions such as StarLink are drastically lower than the old-school satellite systems I've personally deployed from Saipan to St. Thomas, during disaster responses.

In the end, we're good at treating symptoms, terrible at curing disease. The disease is complacency—amplified by the idea that we can cut funding in good times and improvise our way through the bad.

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Embracing the Infinite Mindset in Emergency Management

By Daniel Scott, M.A., CEM, Theory-N2-Practice, Daniel Scott & Associates LLC.

Emergency management is defined by complexity, uncertainty, and continuous evolution. The challenges faced by emergency managers—natural disasters, pandemics, cyber threats, and geopolitical crises—are not finite problems with clear endpoints. Instead, they are ongoing, ever-changing realities that require adaptability, resilience, and long-term strategic thinking.

Traditional emergency management approaches often focus on short-term objectives, such as response efficiency, immediate recovery, and compliance with regulatory frameworks. While these are critical, they can lead to rigid, reactive strategies that fail to prepare organizations for the unpredictability of future crises. Emergency managers must embrace an infinite mindset—a leadership philosophy prioritizing continuous improvement, systemic resilience, and long-term sustainability over immediate victories to overcome this limitation.

The Infinite vs. Finite Mindset in Emergency Management

Simon Sinek, in his book *The Infinite Game*, describes two contrasting mindsets: finite and infinite thinking.

- A finite mindset is focused on short-term goals, fixed outcomes, and competition against others. Emergency management could mean responding to a disaster as an isolated event rather than understanding it as part of a broader cycle of risk, resilience, and adaptation.

- An infinite mindset prioritizes

long-term sustainability, continuous learning, and adaptive capacity. It recognizes that emergency management is not about "winning" but ensuring the system remains effective and resilient over time.

Finite Mindset in Emergency Management: The Risks

■ Reactive Decision-Making:

Agencies focus on immediate response rather than proactive resilience-building.

- **Short-Term Metrics:** Success is measured by how quickly a crisis is resolved rather than by how well long-term risks are mitigated.

- **Rigid Planning:** Emergency operations plans (EOPs) rely on historical precedents, assuming future disasters mirror past events.

The Infinite Mindset: A New Approach

- **Building Adaptive Capacity:** Encouraging continuous learning, scenario-based planning, and flexible response frameworks.

- **Investing in Long-Term Resilience:** Prioritizing risk reduction, hazard mitigation, and cross-sector collaboration over immediate response metrics.

- **Fostering a Culture of Innovation:** Encouraging teams to explore new technologies, unconventional partnerships, and data-driven solutions.

Key Principles of the Infinite Mindset in Emergency Management

- **Emphasizing Long-Term Resilience Over Short-Term Success:**

A finite-minded agency may define success as restoring power to a disaster-stricken area within 48 hours. While this is crucial, an infinite-minded agency asks:

- How can we prevent power outages in the first place?
- What investments in grid modernization or microgrids can improve resilience?

For example, after Hurricane Maria (2017), Puerto Rico shifted from a reactive recovery model to an infinite mindset by investing in decentralized renewable energy infrastructure to reduce vulnerability to future storms.

■ Encouraging Continuous Learning and Adaptation:

The best emergency managers understand that no plan survives first contact with reality. The most effective strategies evolve based on real-world feedback, data analytics, and post-incident reviews.

- The National Resilience Guidance (2024) emphasizes the importance of iterative learning, adaptive management, and real-time intelligence integration into disaster preparedness efforts.

- Agencies that adopt after-action reporting as a standard practice foster a culture where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities rather than failures:

■ Collaborating Beyond Traditional Boundaries.

An infinite mindset recognizes that emergency management is not a zero-sum game. True resilience requires whole-community engagement, including:

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Infinite Mindset in Emergency Management

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- Public-private partnerships: Leveraging the expertise of tech companies, logistics providers, and infrastructure firms.

- Faith-based and community organizations: Trusted networks that enhance disaster relief, social support, and recovery services.

- Global knowledge-sharing: Learning from international best practices, such as Japan's seismic resilience measures or the Netherlands' flood mitigation strategies.

■ Prioritizing Psychological and Organizational Resilience:

Emergency managers operate in high-stress environments, where burnout, decision fatigue, and trauma exposure are real concerns. Organizations with an infinite mindset:

- Develop leadership training programs focused on mental resilience and strategic stress management.

- Encourage professional development to ensure teams stay ahead of emerging threats and technologies.

- Invest in employee well-being programs to prevent attrition and improve long-term performance.

Real-World Applications of the Infinite Mindset

■ **Case Study 1: The Netherlands and Long-Term Flood Resilience:** Unlike nations focusing on short-term flood recovery, the Netherlands has adopted an infinite approach to water management. Rather than fighting floods, they have redesigned cities to live with water—incorporating:

- Floating neighborhoods.
- Multi-use water retention areas.
- Nature-based solutions for flood mitigation.

By prioritizing long-term resilience over short-term fixes, they have reduced disaster vulnerability while improving sustainability.

■ **Case Study 2: The Evolution of California's Wildfire Strategy:** California historically fought wildfires with a finite mindset—focusing on immediate suppression rather than prevention. After record-breaking wildfires in recent years, state agencies have shifted to an infinite approach by:

- Investing in controlled burns to reduce fuel loads.
- Developing AI-driven early detection systems.
- Encouraging community-based fire resilience programs.

This shift reflects a broader recognition that wildfires are not isolated events but ongoing environmental challenges requiring long-term adaptation.

Conclusion: Leading with an Infinite Mindset

Embracing an infinite mindset in emergency management requires a fundamental shift in how agencies, leaders, and communities approach disaster preparedness and response. Instead of reacting to crises in isolation, we must:

- Prioritize long-term resilience over short-term gains.
- Foster a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.
- Expand collaboration beyond traditional emergency management boundaries.
- Develop strategies that evolve alongside emerging threats.

Emergency managers can build systems, communities, and organizations that thrive in uncertainty by thinking beyond immediate victories and embracing a future-focused approach. ♦

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Twenty Years After Katrina

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The Cost of Forgetting

On May 10, 2006, Mayor Ray Nagin declared a Special Day of Honor in my name, recognizing my work after Katrina. But the real credit belongs to the men and women of my beloved team, who embraced what we say and learned, and in most cases, let that disaster redefine us. None of us has been the same since – nor would we want it any other way.

Their stories of the citizens of New Orleans, many so well told in the new Katrina documentary, should be our roadmap. Instead, we're letting them fade.

The next major storm is forming somewhere right now. The question is not if we'll face another Katrina—it's whether we'll be ready.

If we forget what Katrina taught us, we don't just dishonor the dead. We endanger the living. ♦

EM Calendar

August	Emergency Management Awareness Month
Aug. 25-28	National Homeland Security Conference Washington, D.C.
Sept. 10-11	2025 Specialized Analytic Seminar Series: Critical Infrastructure U.S. DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Engagement Pembroke, New Hampshire
Nov. 14-20	2025 IAEM Annual Conference Louisville, Kentucky

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