Vol. 42 No. 11 November 2025 INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EMERGENCY MANAGERS

# IAEM Bulletin

## In This Issue



International Association of Emergency Managers

# Welcoming Nicole Blankenship, MBA, CAE, as Executive Director: A New Chapter of Leadership and Vision

The International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) is pleased to announce the appointment of Nicole Blankenship, MBA, CAE, as its new executive director. A seasoned nonprofit and association executive, Blankenship brings more than 30 years of experience in strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement, and operational excellence to IAEM's global community of emergency management professionals.

*Nicole Blankenship, MBA, CAE, incoming executive director, IAEM*

### A Proven Leader in Association Management

Throughout her career, Blankenship has demonstrated a consistent ability to transform organizations, elevate member experiences, and build lasting partnerships. Her leadership journey includes nearly three decades at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), where she directed chapter and district relations, managed multimillion-dollar budgets, and led award-winning process improvements.

She later joined the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), where she served as senior vice president of affiliate relations. At AOA, she revitalized relationships with its affiliates, increased national conference attendance, and consistently exceeded conference net profit targets. Her work also led to full participation from every osteopathic medical specialty society in AOA's annual conference programming for the first time in the organization's history.

### Strategic Vision for IAEM

As executive director, Blankenship is responsible for overseeing IAEM's strategic planning, governance support, member services, communications, and business development. She leads a staff team of 16 professionals and works closely with the IAEM Board of Directors to imple-

continued on page 2

## Welcoming Nicole Blankenship

continued from page 1

ment the association's mission and goals. Her responsibilities include managing fiscal operations, supporting governance and committee work, overseeing certification, advocacy, and communications programs, and representing IAEM in industry partnerships and public forums.

Blankenship's leadership style is rooted in collaboration, data-informed decision-making, and a deep respect for the emergency management profession. "Emergency managers are the backbone of community resilience," she said. "It's an honor to serve an organization that empowers these professionals and advances their vital work."

## Education and Credentials

Blankenship holds a Master of Business Administration from Roosevelt University and a Bachelor of Science in Health Administration from Northern Illinois University. She earned the Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential from the American Society of Association Executives in 2009, recertifying every three years, and is active in professional organizations, including ASAE and the Association Forum of Chicagoland.

## Community Engagement and Personal Life

In addition to her professional achievements, Blankenship is a dedicated community volunteer. She currently serves on the board of directors for the Well Child Center in Elgin, Illinois, where she contributes to strategic planning and governance. Her past volunteer roles include board service for Campton United Soccer Club and support for the Northern Illinois Food Bank. Blankenship resides in St. Charles, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. She and her husband have two grown daughters and a cockapoo (their favorite) who just turned 16. When she is not working or traveling for business, she enjoys reading, going on long walks, and watching documentaries of all types, but especially those of the true crime variety.

## What Might Surprise You

Blankenship has a Black Belt in Kyuki-do, a Korean martial art that combines elements from the disciplines of Taekwondo, Hapkido, Judo, and Jiu-Jitsu. Its name translates to "the art of striking with energy," and it focuses on versatile and practical self-defense techniques. Blankenship explained, "There are six tenets of Kyuki-do: courtesy, humility, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and Indomitable spirit. And when you think about it, that's what leadership is all about."

- **Favorite Book**: When asked about her favorite book, Blankenship professed, "This is too hard! I have many favorite books, but two that I reread almost every year are The Midnight Library by Matthew Haig and The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho."
- **Favorite Quote**: Blankenship said she has three favorite quotes that she references repeatedly, adding, "If you don't believe me, just ask my daughters. They grew up hearing them over and over again throughout their childhoods!".
  - *Whether you think you can, or think you can't, you're right.* ~ Henry Ford
  - *Success is not final; failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts.* ~Winston Churchill
  - *Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.* ~ Saint Mother Teresa.

## Looking Ahead

Blankenship's appointment marks a new chapter for IAEM, one focused on innovation and strategic growth. Her experience in nonprofit governance, communications strategy, and member engagement aligns with IAEM's mission to serve and support emergency management professionals worldwide. "I'm excited to work alongside IAEM's membership, member leaders, and dedicated staff", Blankenship said. "Together, we will build on the association's strong foundation and chart a course toward even greater impact." Blankenship will officially become IAEM's executive director on Nov. 20, 2025.

# IAEM News to Know

## Conference

■ Get a sneak peek of the IAEM Poster Showcase prior to your arrival in Louisville. See the latest research and listen to 4-minute videos from the participants. Plus, view the posters of IAEM Caucus/Committee/Commission/Regions to see how to get involved in IAEM. Visit the IAEM website and join the participants during the presentation session on Tuesday, Nov. 18, from 10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in the Main Concourse Pre-Function Lobby.

## Certification

■ With the launch of the new certification portal, applicants are reminded that if they are due to recertify after 2025 and have an open application in the legacy portal, the deadline to submit in the legacy portal is Dec. 31, 2025. If submitting later, recertification documentation must be transferred to the new certification portal. We will maintain access to the legacy portal into 2026 to continue access to submitted documents.

## IAEM2Go Mobile App

■ The IAEM2Go mobile app is the Annual Conference goers' essential piece of technology—this free app gives you access to IAEM's program, allows you to download and see presentations, provides maps to navigate the convention center, and many more helpful features to enhance your attendee experience. For attendees who do not have a mobile device, the app content is available online. Navigate to "Events", then click on "73rd Annual Conference & EMEX." Scan the below QR code to download IAEM2Go today!🔷

*Google Store for IAEM2GO*


*Challenge coins will be available during the 2025 IAEM Annual Conference.*

*Apple Store for IAEM2GO*

# IAEM Scholarship Program at the 73rd Annual Conference

## IAEM Online Auction

The IAEM auction is open to everyone. You do not need to be present at the conference. Items will be shipped to winning bidders. Bidding is now open at Better World.

Bidding will end at 12:30 p.m. EST, Wednesday, Nov. 19 . If you are present at the conference, you should pick up the items between 1:00 – 2:30 pm EST.

Have an item to donate? - Please use the Online Item Donation Form.

## Basket Bonanza Fun for Conference Attendees

IAEM Basket Bonanza opens on Monday, **Nov. 17, at 7:00 am EST**. All baskets will be drawn at 12:45 p.m. EST on Wednesday, Nov. 19.

Purchase your tickets online now through 12 pm EST, Nov. 19 using a credit card online. (Onsite ticket sales will continue at the booth until the drawing begins at 12:45.)

## Coins Sales for Scholarship

Visit the IAEM Scholarship Auction Booth to purchase three coins to benefit the program.

## Regional Fundraising Challenge

During the Month of November, and especially at the IAEM Annual Conference, the IAEM-USA regions and the UCC will be engaged in fundraising. The challenge will help celebrate the 25th Anniversary and will end on Giving Tuesday at 12:01 a.m. EST, Wednesday, Dec. 3.

## Choose from these IAEM-USA Regional Giving Portals!

- IAEM-USA Region 1.
- IAEM-USA Region 2.
- IAEM-USA Region 3.
- IAEM-USA Region 4.
- IAEM-USA Region 5.
- IAEM-USA Region 6.
- IAEM-USA Region 7.
- IAEM-USA Region 8.
- IAEM-USA Region 9.
- IAEM-USA Region 10.

*IAEM Scholarship Progarm 25th Anniversary Coin - Sales begin at the conference for this coin limited to one pressing of 150 coins.*



*IAEM Official Scholarship Coin - This coin will be for sale at the conference. It may be purchased online for $30 per coin and $5 S&H for up to 5 coins. Not coming to the conference, order your coin now at https://iaemscholarship.betterworld.org/campaigns/iaem-scholarship-coin.*


## Special Focus Articles Part 2:

Due to the volume of submissions on this special focus topic, it is necessary to present the content in two parts. Part 1 is available in the Oct. edition of the IAEM Bulletin.



## IAEM Winning Scholarship Essay Selection, Part 2:

To recognize the 2025 IAEM Scholarship awaredees, we have a selection of winning essays offered below; given the quality of the scholarship winners it is necessary to present the content in two parts. Part 1 is available in the Oct. edition of the IAEM Bulletin.



## 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.

# Champions of Change in Emergency Management: The Global Role of GIS from the U.S. to the World

**By Ahmed Gharib Ibrahim Megahed, Geographic Information Systems Consultant**

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have become indispensable in emergency management, offering a sophisticated framework for analyzing, visualizing, and interpreting spatial data. Over the past two decades, GIS has transitioned from a supportive tool to a central pillar in disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience planning. In the United States, federal and local agencies, notably the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), have demonstrated the transformative impact of GIS in managing disasters, from hurricanes and wildfires to floods and earthquakes (FEMA, 2023).

Yet the influence of GIS is not confined to the United States. Across the globe, emergency management organizations increasingly adopt GIS technologies to confront complex challenges, ranging from climate-induced hazards to urban disaster risks. By facilitating real-time decision-making, supporting data-driven operations, and enabling global knowledge exchange, GIS has emerged as both a technological and strategic "champion of change" in emergency management worldwide. This article explores the dual role of GIS: as a tool enhancing operational effectiveness in the United States and as a bridge fostering global collaboration, coordination, and resilience.

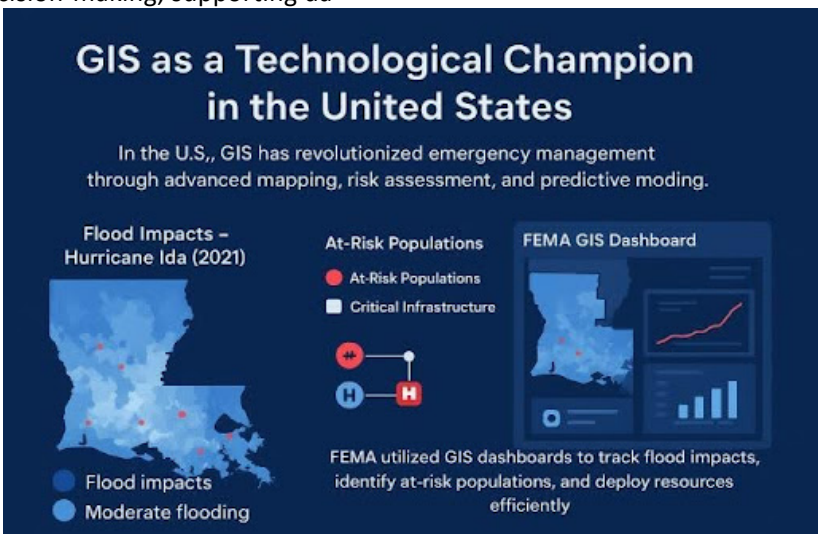
## GIS as a Technological Champion in the United States

In the United States, GIS has revolutionized emergency management through advanced mapping, risk assessment, and predictive modeling. FEMA, for instance, employs GIS to integrate multiple data sources—satellite imagery, demographic data, critical infrastructure, and hazard simulations—into actionable intelligence for emergency response teams (FEMA, 2022). During Hurricane Ida (2021), FEMA utilized GIS dashboards to track flood impacts, identify at-risk populations, and deploy resources efficiently.

Beyond disaster response, GIS supports preparedness and mitigation. For example, HAZUS-MH, FEMA's GIS-based software, allows agencies to estimate potential losses from natural hazards, enabling proactive planning (FEMA, 2020). These predictive capabilities improve resource allocation, optimize evacuation routes, and enhance community resilience. Furthermore, GIS enables detailed after-action analysis, providing lessons learned and supporting future disaster planning.

The United States has also emphasized GIS integration in inter-agency collaboration. Tools such as ArcGIS Online, ArcGIS.

Dashboards and Esri StoryMaps enable state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies to share real-time information during emergencies, improving coordination and situational awareness (Esri, 2023). GIS thus transforms fragmented data streams into coherent, actionable intelligence, a core function for champions of change in emergency management.




*GIS as a Technological Champion in the United States. FEMA's use of GIS dashboards and HAZUS-MH supports disaster response, preparedness, and inter-agency coordination.*
*Source: FEMA, 2020; FEMA, 2022; Esri, 2023.*

## Bridging U.S. Practices to Global Perspectives

The success of GIS in the United States has inspired international adoption. Countries such as Japan, Australia, and the Philippines have integrated GIS into national disaster management strategies, adapting U.S.-derived methodologies to local contexts (UNDRR, 2021). For instance, Japan's Cabinet Office

continued on page 7

## The Global Role of GIS from the U.S. to the World

continued from page 6

and Fire and Disaster Management Agency leverage GIS to map tsunami and earthquake hazards, while Australia's State Emergency Services employ GIS for bushfire risk assessment.

Moreover, GIS facilitates cross-border collaboration in response to global hazards. During the 2022 floods in Pakistan, international NGOs collaborated with local agencies using GIS to identify flood-affected regions, coordinate relief efforts, and prioritize resource distribution. By sharing GIS-enabled maps and analyses developed in the United States, international partners benefited from proven modeling techniques, highlighting GIS as a bridge between national practices and global application (World Bank, 2022).

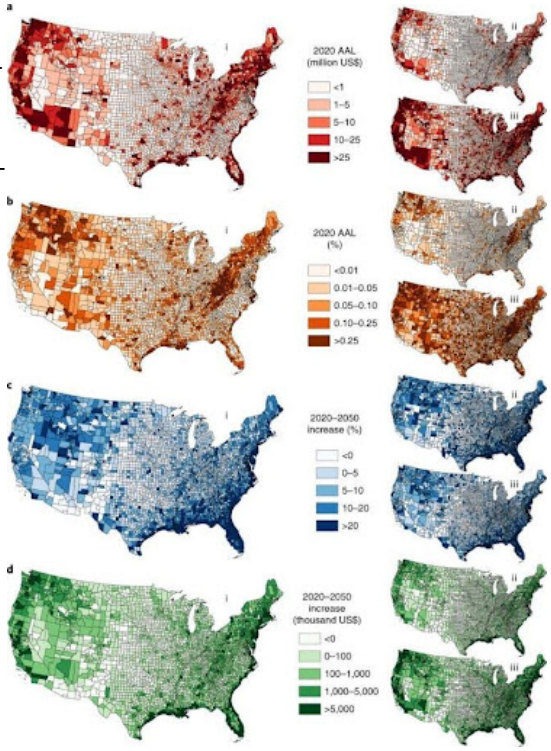
This global perspective demonstrates GIS's dual role: it is both a U.S.-originated technological innovation and a platform for knowledge transfer. By adapting GIS workflows to regional hazards and infrastructure, emergency managers worldwide can emulate U.S. best practices while addressing local needs.

## GIS Driving Data-Driven Leadership and Coordination

One of the most significant contributions of GIS to emergency management is its ability to strengthen leadership, collaboration, and coordination. GIS transforms how leaders conceptualize hazards, visualize vulnerabilities, and make decisions under uncertainty (Alexander, 2020). For example, during the 2020 California wildfires, GIS dashboards enabled incident commanders to monitor fire progression, allocate firefighting resources, and coordinate evacuation strategies across multiple agencies.

GIS also enhances stakeholder collaboration. By providing a common operational picture, GIS facilitates communication between government entities, NGOs, private sector partners, and community organizations (IFRC, 2021). This capability aligns with IAEM's emphasis on champions of change: leaders who foster coordinated, transparent, and efficient responses to complex emergencies.

Additionally, GIS empowers local communities to engage in disaster management. Publicly accessible maps and decision-support tools increase citizen awareness, enable participatory planning, and promote preparedness. In this sense, GIS is not merely a tool but a vehicle for cultivating champions at all levels of society.




*Addressing Vulnerable Populations and Climate Change. County-level flood risk in the United States, showing 2020 annual average loss (AAL), AAL as a percentage of GDP, and projected increases by 2050. Source: Wing et al., 2022, Nature Climate Change.*


*Bridging U.S. Practices to Global Perspectives. Examples of GIS adoption in Japan, Australia, and the Philippines for tsunami, bushfire, and disaster management applications. Source: UNDRR, 2021; World Bank, 2022*

## Addressing Vulnerable Populations and Climate Change

A critical aspect of emergency management is ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable populations. GIS enables precise identification of populations with access and functional needs, elderly residents, and socioeconomically disadvantaged

continued on page 8

## The Global Role of GIS from the U.S. to the World

continued from page 7

groups. During Hurricane Katrina recovery operations, GIS mapping of neighborhoods and service accessibility helped target relief efforts effectively (Goodchild, 2018).

Climate change presents additional challenges. Rising seas, extreme weather events, and urban heat islands require predictive, data-driven interventions. GIS-based simulations allow planners to assess potential impacts, develop mitigation strategies, and enhance resilience (IPCC, 2022). For example, integrating FEMA hazard data with climate models enables scenario planning for future hurricanes along the U.S. East Coast. The global applicability of these models underscores the international relevance of GIS as a champion of change.

## Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Growth

The integration of GIS into emergency management illustrates several lessons for both United States and international practitioners:

- **Invest in Data Quality and Accessibility**: High-quality, real-time data is the foundation of effective GIS applications. Open data initiatives and interoperable platforms enhance decision-making capabilities.
- **Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration**: GIS thrives when agencies, private partners, and NGOs collaborate. Knowledge-sharing accelerates innovation and improves operational outcomes.
- **Prioritize Training and Capacity Building**: GIS is most effective when personnel are trained in both technology and strategic application. Continuous professional development ensures that GIS expertise evolves alongside emerging hazards.
- **Integrate GIS into Policy and Planning**: GIS should inform policy decisions, from zoning regulations to climate adaptation strategies, ensuring that data-driven insights guide long-term resilience.

These principles are universal, reinforcing GIS's role as a bridge for global champions of change in emergency management.

## Conclusion

Geographic Information Systems have emerged as a transformative force in emergency management, functioning both as a technological innovation and a unifying platform for global collaboration. In the United States, GIS has enhanced preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience, exemplifying leadership and coordination aligned with IAEM's "Champions of Change" ethos. Internationally, GIS adoption enables countries to leverage U.S.-derived methodologies while adapting to local hazards, socio-economic contexts, and climate challenges.

By integrating real-time data, predictive modeling, and visualization capabilities, GIS empowers leaders, supports vulnerable populations, and strengthens multi-agency collaboration. Its global influence underscores the potential for shared learning, innovation, and improved disaster outcomes worldwide.

In essence, GIS is not only a technological tool but a strategic champion of change—bridging the U.S. and global practices in emergency management and setting a standard for leadership, collaboration, and resilience across nations.

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# Mentorship to Success: Building Enduring Disaster Coordination Capacity

**By E. Weeks-Comeau, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Mammoth Hospital**

Stepping into a new disaster coordinator role, especially in rural healthcare settings, can feel overwhelming. One enters with binders of unfamiliar plans, acronyms that don't yet make sense, and the implicit pressure of making life-safety decisions. But mentorship offers a powerful counterbalance: "You have someone at your side who has walked this path before." That guiding presence can transform uncertainty into confidence—not only for individuals, but for organizations and entire communities.

In this article, I present evidence and experience to argue that mentorship is a strategic imperative in emergency management. I'll draw from federal-level research, academic health care studies, and our own field practice to offer models, recommendations, and inspiration for those considering starting a mentorship program or becoming a mentor.

## Why Mentorship Matters: Evidence Across Domains

**FEMA's Incident Workforce and Mentorship Gaps**: A recent RAND report on mentorship efforts within FEMA's Incident Workforce underscores both the potential and the current limitations. The authors note that while "informal mentorship was described as more common and easier to establish," many existing formal mentorships in FEMA last less than six months and lack formal evaluation or dedicated budget. (RAND Corporation) They recommend building mentorship into training, clarifying expectations, and expanding access to reservists and others currently underserved. (RAND Corporation)

**Academic Health Care**: What Makes or Breaks Mentorship: In exploring mentoring relationships in medicine, Straus et al. found that "Successful mentoring relationships were characterized by reciprocity, mutual respect, clear expectations, personal connection, and shared values." (PMC) Conversely, failed mentorships often share traits such as poor communication, waning interest, or a mismatch in expectations. (education.med.wustl.edu)

A UCSF summary of the study adds that "the mentee needs to think about what they are bringing to the table … and thereby help [the mentor] grow as a mentor." (Home) These insights affirm that effective mentorship is relational and bidirectional—not top-down.

Together, these lines of evidence reinforce that mentorship only works when relationships are intentional, aligned, and sustained.

## Designing Mentorship for Rural Health EM Programs

When translating theory into practice in rural healthcare emergency management, several lessons emerge:

- **Formality + Flexibility**: While informal mentorship relationships often sprout from personal connection, formal programs help sustain them. FEMA's experience shows that mentorship efforts need structure, dedicated resources, and clear expectations (RAND Corporation). For rural hospital systems, adopting models from IAEM or FEMA can provide scaffolding while allowing local adaptability.
- **Clarify Expectations Up Front**: Drawing from the health care literature: "Mentorship thrives when expectations are clear and values are shared" (PMC). At the outset, mentors, and mentees should co-develop goals, meeting cadences, and deliverables. That agreement becomes a reference point when the relationship is tested.
- **Select for "Chemistry," Not Just Credentials**: One scholar notes that "personal connection … is what is known as chemistry … and contrary to popular belief, chemistry can be created, by being actively present in the relationship" (Home). This suggests matching should consider communication styles and interpersonal alignment—not only titles or technical roles.
- **Invest in Mentor Training and Support**: Many mentors are experts in content but not in relational leadership. As FEMA's review points out, future mentorship programs should include training in conflict management, communication, and inclusion (RAND Corporation). Mentor training helps mitigate risks of over-advising, burnout, or mismatch.
- **Monitor, Evaluate, Adapt**: Short mentorship durations and lack of evaluation are common pitfalls in large organizations (RAND Corporation). Use periodic check-ins, feedback loops, and structured assessments (qualitative and quantitative) to adapt approaches and sustain momentum.

## In Practice: Supporting a New Disaster Coordinator

To put mentorship into motion, here is a suggested approach informed by both research and field

continued on page 10

## Mentorship to Success

continued from page 9

experience—

**Launch with Intent**:

- Start with a "meet and discover" session to align values, communication preferences, and goals—like a first date in a professional context.
- Draft a compact agreement (goals, cadence, roles) that both mentor and mentee commit to.

**Build Organizational Foundations**:

- Sponsor buy-in from leadership so mentorship is seen as strategic, not extracurricular.
- Allocate modest resources—administrative time, meeting space, or software matching tools.

**Guide Mentee Growth Through Phases**:

- Know Your Organization: Mentor guidance helps the new coordinator map hazards, regulatory requirements, and institutional history.
- Create an Engaged Network: The Mentor can facilitate introductions and teach stakeholder engagement strategies.

**Become the Expert**:

- Mentor supports the mentee stepping into training, leadership, and exercise responsibilities.

**Reflect, Iterate, Celebrate**:

- Use regular check-ins to revisit goals and course-correct.
- Celebrate milestones, growth, and successes publicly to reinforce value.
- At end-of-cycle, evaluate outcomes (skills gained, confidence built, program enhancements) and decide on continuation or transition.

## Conclusion

The evidence is clear: mentorship is not optional—it's an essential mechanism for resilience, professional development, and institutional continuity. Whether in FEMA's Incident Workforce or in academic health care, mentorship programs flourish when grounded in reciprocity, clear expectations, and human connection.

If you lead an emergency management office, a rural hospital, or an EM association, consider the following:

- Embed mentorship as a strategic objective.
- Champion mentors who lead with empathy, humility, and vision.
- Encourage new coordinators to proactively seek guidance.

As one mentor phrased it, "Lessons shared today strengthen not just one coordinator, but the entire system they serve." Let us build a legacy where no new disaster coordinator stands alone—where every community benefits from stronger, connected leadership, and mentorship is a force multiplier for resilience.

Ask yourself: Who can I mentor? Who might mentor me? 🔷

## Resources & References


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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.

# Bridging Barriers: Champions for Inclusive Disaster Management in Immigrant Communities

By Yvonne Dadson, Doctoral Student, Research Project Assistant - Extreme Events, Social Equity and Technology Lab, College of Emergency, Preparedness, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity, University at Albany-SUNY

Today, emergency managers face a cruel reality. Families are forced to choose between taking shelter from a hurricane and being deported. This is not merely a policy discussion; this is life or death for these families as they live in our communities. New federal policies create a dilemma for the 15.8% of the population that is foreign-born or an immigrant. The Department of Homeland Security states, "Disaster assistance will not be provided to undocumented immigrants," and the Department of Health and Human Services states that undocumented immigrants may not access services through all 44 federal programs. These polices are at odds with the professional ethic that states, "the job of emergency management is to protect lives before, during, and after disasters." Emergency managers are advocates for communities. How can emergency manager provide inclusive emergency management when federal policies require them to exclude?

## The Reality Check: Four Critical Barriers

**Fear of Legal Status Expands into Life and Death**: In a new set of regulations aimed at severe consequences for aid organizations that do not cooperate with immigration enforcement, undocumented families are forced to make impossible choices. Even legally present immigrants, such as those with Temporary Protected Status and DACA recipients, are excluded from life-saving mechanisms. Fear prevents families from accessing assistance that could save their lives.

**Economic Exhaustion Creates Disaster Vulnerabilities**: Many immigrant families work essential, but at-will positions in construction, agriculture, and hospitality without benefits or safety nets. When disaster or significant disruption occurs, they have no savings to evacuate, insurance to recuperate, or job security to rebuild. Emergency managers' report seeing some families choose between buying groceries and purchasing emergency supplies.

**Access to information** goes beyond language access. Emergency notifications seldom get to immigrant communities through trusted sources. There are also cultural differences in risk and response behavior, meaning traditional emergency messaging do not resonate or elicit a response. When fear of authorities increases, governing agencies are even less likely to use information from the media.

**Structural inequities** place immigrant families in vulnerable situations. Reliance on public transportation provides a limited ability to evacuate. Overcrowded housing increases exposure to hazards. Living in flood-prone or fire-prone areas without the ability to relocate increases disaster impacts.

## When Policies Collide: The Perfect Storm

For instance, a statistic that emergency managers finds deeply concerning: 30% of immigrant adults rely on Community Health Centers for primary care, rising to 42% among undocumented immigrants. The new HHS restrictions eliminate this crucial medical infrastructure precisely when disasters demand increased health services. Emergency managers witness the operational impacts firsthand: immigrant families avoiding evacuation orders, refusing emergency medical treatment, declining shelter services. These are not statistics; they are neighbors making life-threatening decisions based on fear. When significant portions of communities do not evacuate, do not seek medical care, or do not access recovery resources, everyone's resilience suffers.

## Championship in Action: What Actually Works

Despite federal restrictions, emergency managers retain significant authority and creative options. Here is what successful communities are doing:

**Build Robust Community Partnerships**: Religious institutions, cultural organizations, and community groups not receiving federal funds can provide parallel support systems. Formalize these relationships before disasters through memoranda of understanding. During Hurricane Florence, North Carolina communities used church networks to reach undocumented families with evacuation assistance when official channels failed. Lives were saved because emergency managers thought creatively about trusted messengers.

**Leverage Local Authority**: Many emergency management decisions remain under local control. Cities and counties can use local funding to provide inclusive services. Seattle

continued on page 12

## Inclusive Disaster Management in Immigrant Communities

continued from page 11

demonstrated this during COVID-19 by using city funds to ensure all residents received emergency assistance regardless of status.

**Establish Safe Zone Protocols**: Clear policies establishing emergency response areas as enforcement-free zones during disasters build trust dramatically. Several California counties implemented protocols ensuring medical treatment and emergency shelter occur without status verification, significantly increasing immigrant participation in evacuation programs.

**Deploy Trusted Messenger Networks**: Train community members as emergency preparedness ambassadors who share life-saving information through cultural networks. Houston's Promotora program successfully increased hurricane preparedness in immigrant communities by working through existing trusted relationships.

**Use Technology Strategically**: Anonymous reporting systems, multilingual apps, and social media campaigns can disseminate emergency information without requiring formal interaction with authorities.

## Measuring What Matters: Accountability That Saves Lives

True championship requires tracking what works. Emergency managers recommend monitoring:

- Evacuation rates by neighborhood demographics.
- Shelter utilization in immigrant-dense areas.
- Recovery timeline disparities.
- Community health indicators post-disaster.

This data provides evidence for policy advocacy while identifying gaps in our approaches. When emergency managers demonstrate that exclusionary policies delay community-wide recovery and increase disaster costs, they build stronger cases for inclusive practices.

## Moving Forward: Upholding Our Professional Standards

The International Association of Emergency Managers' commitment to excellence demands serving all community members. In these challenging times, this means:

- **Speaking Truth**: Document how exclusionary policies undermine disaster response effectiveness.
- **Building Bridges**: Create coalitions with legal advocates, health providers, and community organizations.
- **Sharing Innovation**: Exchange successful strategies through professional networks.
- **Advocating Professionally**: Use our expertise to inform policymakers about operational realities.

## Champions Rise to Meet Challenges

Emergency management has always required adapting to complex challenges. Today's intersection of immigration policy and disaster management demands creative problem-solving, ethical leadership, and unwavering commitment to protecting all lives. The strategies presented here, drawn from research and successful field implementation, offer pathways to maintain inclusive emergency management despite policy constraints. As we prepare for increasing climate disasters affecting increasingly diverse communities, our effectiveness depends on ensuring no one gets left behind.

Our communities need champions now more than ever. By bridging barriers and advocating for inclusive practices, we uphold our professional values while building truly resilient communities. The question is not whether communities can afford inclusive emergency management; it is whether they can afford anything less. ◆

# Building Resilience to Extreme Heat: A Collaborative Path Forward

**By Katie Krushinski, CEM, Training & Exercise Program Manager, NOAA Office of Emergency Management**

**The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 73rd Annual Conference on Nov. 19 from 2:45 p.m.-3:45 p.m.**

Over the years, extreme heat has quietly become one of the most pressing climate-related hazards in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data, heat claims an average of 1,220 lives annually—that's more than hurricanes, floods, or tornadoes. The impact is not limited to human health; heat also impacts infrastructure, disrupts energy systems, affects food and water supplies, and creates additional economic costs. For emergency managers, this is not just a seasonal nuisance—it is a growing, complex risk that requires the same level of planning, coordination, and leadership we devote to other high-profile hazards like hurricanes, tornadoes, and blizzards.

Yet, reducing heat risk has historically been difficult. Impacts are often considered "invisible." Many times, governance of heat response falls between the cracks of multiple agencies. Communities lack consistent data, tested plans, or clear accountability. Most importantly, the most vulnerable people—older adults, outdoor workers, unhoused individuals, and marginalized communities—are often those with the least voice in planning.

This is where collaboration, coordination, communication, and cooperation become not just helpful tools but essential practices. Over the past several years, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), through the National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIHHIS), has worked with partners across federal, state, local, academic, private sector, and nonprofit sectors to create a new model of community-driven preparedness. The lessons learned are not unique to heat; they reflect broader truths about how emergency management can thrive as a profession of champions.

## Building a National Framework for Heat Resilience

NIHHIS was launched in 2015 by NOAA and the CDC to provide a coordinated, science-informed approach to heat preparedness. Unlike hazards with clear lead agencies and established playbooks, heat resilience required knitting together expertise in various disciplines — meteorology, public health, urban planning, energy systems, and community advocacy, to name a few.

The system enhances heat preparedness in four main ways:

- **Heat.gov Interagency Information** – a central hub for forecasts, data, and guidance.
- **Community-Driven Observing and Mapping** – empowering residents to document where heat is most severe and who it impacts most.
- **Heat Tabletop Exercises (TTXs)** – opportunities to test plans, strengthen communication, and identify local priorities.
- **Applied Research on Heat Impacts and Actions** – ensuring that scientific advances feed directly into practice.

These efforts are rooted in partnerships and designed to meet communities where they are. By combining science, planning, and personal experience, NIHHIS has helped build momentum for a more holistic approach to heat resilience.

## Why Collaboration Matters

Heat resilience highlights the limits of working in silos. No single agency owns the full picture. Meteorologists may forecast dangerous conditions, but the health providers see the resulting illness; utilities that face strain on energy and other systems; and community groups that witness residents struggling to stay safe. Without coordination, critical gaps emerge.

The NIHHIS-supported TTXs demonstrated the value of bringing diverse voices together. For example, exercise participants included city officials, emergency managers, utilities, healthcare providers, universities, nonprofits, and advocates for vulnerable populations. Each stakeholder brought unique knowledge and resources to the table. However, the dialogue between them created the biggest action momentum.

For emergency managers, this reinforces a familiar truth: our strength lies not only in technical expertise, but in our ability to coordinate and connect. Those in the emergency management field are most effective when serving as the bridge between disciplines — ensuring that no voice

continued on page 14

## Building Resilience to Extreme Heat

continued from page 13

is left out and that planning is more than the sum of its parts.

### Communication as a Lifeline

One of the most obvious lessons to emerge from this work is that communication around heat must extend far beyond alerts. While the National Weather Service (NWS) issues an increasing number of heat watches, warnings, and advisories each year, they alone are not sufficient. For individuals without access to cooling, those who speak languages not covered by standard messages, or those disconnected from traditional information channels, these warnings are only part of the solution.

Effective communication requires trusted messengers, culturally tailored language, and multiple platforms for effective delivery. It also means recognizing that communication is a two-way process—listening to community concerns and incorporating local knowledge into preparedness strategies.

For emergency managers, the broader implication is that risk communication in today's environment must be as diverse as the populations served. Whether addressing heat, flooding, or technological hazards, ensuring that messages are actionable and accessible is central to our role as champions for our citizens.

### Planning as an Ongoing Process

Another theme reinforced across communities is that planning for extreme heat cannot be a one-time effort. The most successful communities treated planning as a living, iterative process that is tested through exercises, refined by after-action reports, and updated regularly to reflect new data and emerging priorities.

Equally important, these planning processes were inclusive. Vulnerable populations were not seen only as recipients of aid, but as contributors to resilience strategies. Their lived experience added a valuable perspective on where interventions were most needed and what barriers stood in the way of effective response.

This mindset — that planning is never "done," but always evolving—offers a model for all areas of emergency management.

### Broader Lessons for the Profession

While the recent work around heat preparedness offers many insights, three rise to the top as particularly relevant for emergency managers:

- **Champions Lead Together**: Leadership in emergency management is rarely about going it alone. It is about convening partners, empowering others, and ensuring that decisions are informed by the full spectrum of expertise.
- **Communication Must Be Equitable**: Risk messages are only effective when they are actionable by all audiences. Equity in communication is not an add-on — it is essential to saving lives.
- **Plans Are Only as Strong as Their Partnerships**: The most resilient communities are those that invest in relationships before disaster strikes. We've learned that building trust across sectors is not optional — it is foundational.

### Looking Ahead

Extreme heat provides a powerful case study of the broader shifts underway in emergency management. It illustrates how risks are becoming more complex, more interconnected, and more uneven in their impacts. It also highlights how our profession must continue to evolve—finding new ways to partner, to communicate, and to lead.

The path forward is not simple. Communities will need to balance immediate response needs with long-term resilience investments. Emergency managers will need to keep pace with emerging science, while ensuring equity remains central to their work. And, above all, we will need to maintain the trust and partnerships that allow us to act quickly and effectively when the stakes are high.

These are not challenges we can tackle alone. These challenges demand the very qualities that define our profession at its best: collaboration, coordination, communication, and cooperation. By leaning into these strengths, we position ourselves to not just respond to today's hazards, but to anticipate tomorrow's.

### A Call to Emergency Managers

Extreme heat has often been called a "silent killer," but silence is not an option for our profession. The lessons emerging from collaborative heat preparedness show what is possible when emergency managers embrace their role as conveners, communicators, and champions for their communities.

The hazards of tomorrow do not respect silos or boundaries. However, with collaboration, coordination, communication, and cooperation, we can continue to lead our communities with resilience and purpose.

Emergency managers are not just responders. We are builders of trust, advocates for equity, and leaders in resilience. In the truest sense, we are champions—for our profession, our partners, and most importantly, for our citizens. ◆

# "Uncle!" Why Do You Feel Like Screaming That Out Loud and What Can You Do About It?

**By Regina Phelps, CEM, President, Emergency Management & Safety Solutions Inc.**

**The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 73rd Annual Conference on Nov. 17 from 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

The past few years have been quite "eventful." From the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic to today's ongoing stresses, a lot has happened. And yes, on some days, I'm sure many of you feel like screaming UNCLE!!! Even champions do!

Is it just you, your region of the country, or the whole world? Actually, many people around the globe feel the same way. Annually, the World Economic Forum (WEF) releases its yearly risk report. The 2025 WEF Risk Report highlights that the world has undergone significant changes since the Global Risk Reports began in 2005.

The 2025 report revealed an increasingly fractured global landscape, where escalating geopolitical, environmental, societal, and technological challenges threaten global stability and progress. This year's report was particularly sobering. The word "bleak" served as the overarching adjective describing the overall state of affairs across its current, two-year, and 10-year outlook projections worldwide. The report highlights a paradigm shift in the world order marked by increased instability and polarizing narratives fueled by declining trust and insecurity.

You might find some of the global trends interesting and probably very familiar. Several societal factors were noted as increasing and causing many other categories to shift in the following categories:

- Societal polarization.
- Economic inequality.
- Decline in health and well-being.
- And major drivers of all the above was mis- and disinformation.

Given the threat landscape, what actions should an emergency manager take? What are the most effective tools and processes available for managing these risks? Great question! My personal goal is to ensure that my team and my clients stay focused on the fundamentals. For me, it's all about getting back to the basics.

## Back to the Basics

With so many threats confronting us, it's wise to focus on the fundamentals first. For our clients, we recommend reviewing these three essential basics:

- **Situational Awareness** – How to get it and what to do with it.
- **Effective Crisis Management Program** – Teams and Process.
- **Crisis Communication** – What you say to all your key identified stakeholders.

## Situational Awareness

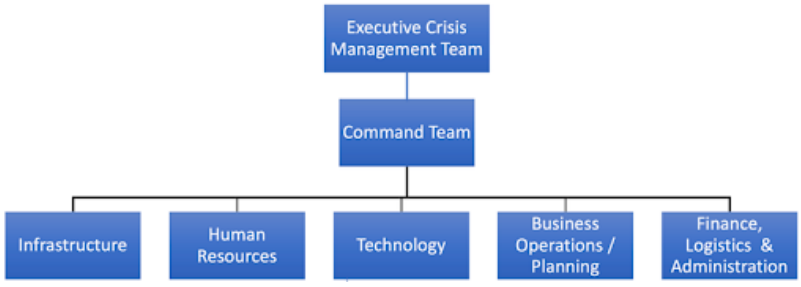
How do you get your situational awareness? How do you know what is happening? Situational awareness is the ability to identify, process, and understand the critical information about an incident. It is simply knowing what is going on around you! That seems obvious, but in a fast-moving incident, it is easy to lose track or become overwhelmed.

Situational awareness requires two distinct activities:

- **Collect**: Observe, acquire, and compile the information.
- **Process**: Assess and validate the information and orient yourself to the possible impacts.

How do you manage all the information? Carefully and hopefully with a plan and tools that are well thought out and practiced in advance. To do that, you need to consider these questions:

- Who are your information sources, where do you find them, and who do you trust?
- How do you assess the information?
- How can you validate the information?
- How do you present it in a meaningful way so that decision makers can understand the information, make decisions, and then act?




*ICS Model as defined in the Guideline for Incident Preparedness and Operational Continuity Management (ISO 22320)*

continued on page 16

## "Uncle!"

continued from page 15

As emergency managers, we understand that situational awareness is crucial for performing our duties effectively.

## Effective Crisis Management Program

An effective crisis management program is another essential element of our work. What is crisis management? A quick internet search offers many responses and approaches, depending on who answers the question—many different professions might answer it quite differently. For our purposes, I favor a broader and more comprehensive approach to the definition, as outlined in the Guideline for Incident Preparedness and Operational Continuity Management (ISO 22320), which refers to "operational continuity management." Their definition describes it as a holistic management process that identifies potential impacts threatening an organization and provides a framework for building resilience, with the capacity for an effective response that protects the interests of its key stakeholders, reputation, brand, and value-creating activities.

In our corporate clients, we successfully use a modified Incident Command System (ICS) structure. As you can see, some team names have been changed to better suit a business environment, but the processes remain the same. Why? Because ICS works!

A key principle is ensuring that all locations have a crisis management process in place. Smaller sites might have just a few people, while larger offices would have a bigger team, and the corporate headquarters would handle all necessary functions. The program should also include criteria for activation, an assessment team, and procedures for notifying headquarters of any activation location.

## Crisis Communication

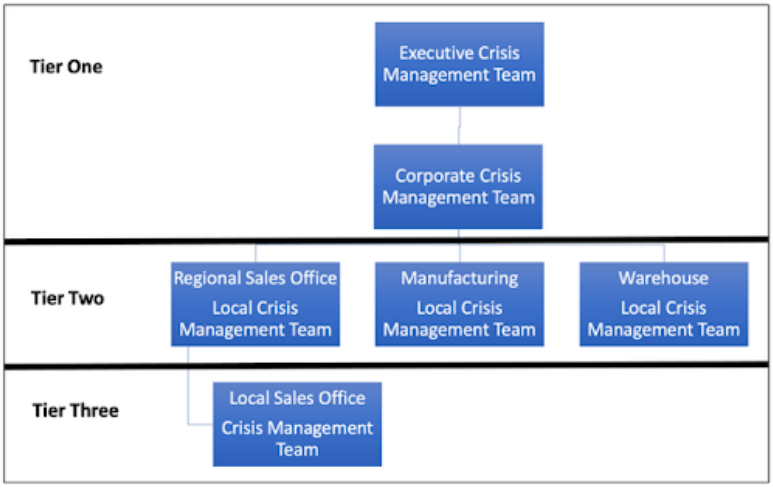
Given our increasingly hyperconnected world, this is more crucial than ever. Everyone with a phone in their pocket is also a reporter, and they can post your crisis on a social media site in just moments. That means your team must be prepared. Effective crisis communications require an established team and process that unites all company communicators to ensure:

- Coordinated.
- Accurate.
- Identified key stakeholders.
- Timely manner.

This doesn't happen by accident. It requires a program, processes, planning, practice, and pre-written templates. Simply put, the communication goal during a crisis or incident is to get the right information to the right people at the right time so they can make the right decisions and issue the right communications.

## In Closing

Given our work, a crisis can occur at any time or place. Our job is to be prepared for when that moment arises. And with our increasingly chaotic world, that can happen at any moment. 🔷




*Modified ICS Model used with corporate clients.*

# Critical Infrastructure Interdependency (CII) Risk Assessment

**By Tyson Macaulay, BA, CISA, P.Eng CIE LEL, Researcher and Lecturer, National Center for Critical Infrastructure Protection, Resilience and Security**

**The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 73rd Annual Conference on Nov. 17 from 2:15 p.m.-3:15 p.m.**

A fully quantitative, standardized risk assessment process is essential for prioritizing investments in critical infrastructure (CI) protection. Historically, both public and private sectors have relied on mixed approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative metrics when evaluating risks and impacts from the loss or degradation of CI. Much of this work occurs during impact analysis and often depends heavily on subject matter expert (SME) judgment to determine severity. While expert knowledge is invaluable, this methodology presents limitations. In particular, when downstream impacts are insufficiently evaluated, the compounding severity of cascading failures may be underestimated or missed altogether.

One of the most pressing challenges in resilience planning is the limited exploration of linkages two or three levels downstream between an initiating CI failure and its ultimate consequences. When cascading impacts are only traced one or two steps, risk assessments often overlook the compounding disruptions that ripple through interdependent systems. As a result, decision-makers may not recognize the true scale of risk exposure, which complicates the design of effective resilience strategies. In practice, this blind spot can result in multiple life safety impacts to populations that rely simultaneously on more than one CI sector.

## The Emergence of Critical Infrastructure Interdependency (CII) Modelling

"Critical Infrastructure Interdependency (CII) modelling" is an emerging approach designed to address these limitations. Unlike traditional risk assessment methodologies, CII modelling emphasizes quantitative metrics that yield results which are repeatable, reproducible, and defensible as valid inputs to policy and operational decision-making. This allows for consistent evaluations across jurisdictions, timeframes, and assessors—essential qualities for a field where trust, transparency, and accountability are paramount.

Econometric tools, particularly Input–Output (I–O) tables developed by national statistical agencies, provide a powerful foundation for CII modelling. These open-source datasets are published by most OECD countries and describe the financial flows between industries. Such econometrics correlate strongly with other forms of interdependency metrics, as well as with after-action reports and post-mortems of incidents where cascading failures played a critical role.

Figure 1 illustrates the application of econometrics to visualize cascading impacts across industries following concurrent disruptions to pipeline and water infrastructure. The diagram models not only the immediate consequences within those sectors (value at risk) but also how impacts propagate through supply-chain linkages into both critical and non-critical industries.

In Figure 1, the left-hand column depicts the initiating events: disruptions in pipeline transporta-

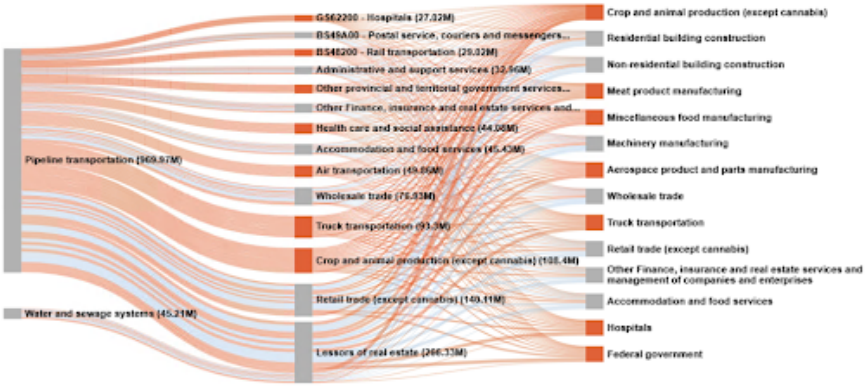



*Figure 1: Example of cascading impacts on CI from a localized pipeline concurrent impacts to pipelines and water infrastructure.*

continued on page 18

## Critical Infrastructure Interdependency

continued from page 17

tion and water and sewage systems. These are traditionally recognized CI sector-industries. The middle column shows the first-order cascade—industries that are directly dependent on pipelines or water. These include clearly critical sectors such as Health (hospitals), Transportation (trucking) and Food (Crop and Animal production), as well as sectors not traditionally categorized as "critical," such as wholesale trade or real estate.

The right-hand column displays the second cascade in industries impacted through their dependence on those in the middle column. For example, the disruption of truck transportation does not stop at the logistics sector; it propagates into food supply, manufacturing, and health services. Some sectors, like truck transportation itself, experience repeated cascading impacts, underscoring their centrality in the system of interdependencies. Others, such as food, accumulate impacts across multiple supply chain paths, highlighting systemic vulnerabilities.

What makes this visual valuable is not merely its qualitative depiction of dependencies but the quantitative information it conveys. The flows represent dollar values of inter-industry transactions, allowing analysts to translate cascading impacts directly into monetary terms. These values can be mapped into risk matrices commonly used by emergency managers, where "impact" is quantified, and "likelihood" can be assessed either through SME judgment or systematic classification schemes (e.g., based on geo-spatial exposure, ownership structures, or competitive market conditions).

## Expanding the Toolkit: Beyond Econometrics

While econometric I–O tables are powerful, they represent only one dimension of interdependency. Other forms of quantitative metrics can complement them to create compound models. For example, in the cyber domain, metrics associated with data sensitivity to confidentiality, integrity and availability requirements can be integrated with economic flows. This hybridization enables assessments that reflect both physical and digital interdependencies—an increasingly critical requirement as supply chains are digitized, automated, and real-time in nature.

Moreover, advances in visualization and modelling tools allow analysts to simulate cascading effects cheaply and dynamically, rather than perishable analysis done by expensive expert systems. These approaches can account for time-sensitive variables such as recovery timelines, substitution effects, and adaptive behaviors. Integrating econometric and cyber metrics into such models holds promise for creating truly holistic resilience assessments.

## Toward a Standardized Risk Assessment Process

For CII modelling to reach its full potential, it must be incorporated into standardized processes that guide risk assessment and resilience planning across governments and industries. Such a process would rest on three pillars:

- **Quantitative Impact Metrics**: Derived from econometrics, cyber metrics, and other standardized datasets, ensuring reproducibility and defensibility.
- **Systematic Likelihood Assessment**: Using classification schemes informed by geography, ownership, and competition, supplemented by SME input where necessary.
- **Dynamic Modelling of Cascades**: Capturing not just immediate impacts but also time-based cascades that move at different speeds through systems based on ephemeral factors both domestic and international.

By embedding CII modelling into this standardized framework, decision-makers will gain a more accurate, holistic understanding of risk. This, in turn, enables better prioritization of resilience investments—whether in redundancy, hardening, cybersecurity, or cross-border cooperation. 🔷

# Navigating Energy Security Planning

**By Elizabeth Meister, MSEM, Research Associate, University of Oklahoma, Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis; and Sam Stormer, MPA, Research Associate, University of Oklahoma, Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis**

**The authors will be speaking as part of the IAEM 73rd Annual Conference on Nov. 17 from 2:15 p.m.-3:15 p.m.**

The energy sector holds a uniquely foundational role in the economy, as nearly all other economic sectors rely heavily on the availability of electricity and fuel. Because of this foundational role, disruptions to key energy assets can have not only immediate but also cascading consequences, undermining the stability and continuity of commercial and industrial operations and posing a risk to public safety and national security.

Energy security planning focuses on ensuring a dependable and robust energy supply by identifying, evaluating, and addressing risks to energy systems. It also involves comprehensive preparedness, response, and recovery strategies for events that may interrupt energy systems. Today, energy infrastructure is increasingly exposed to a broad array of hazards – including extreme weather, cyber-attacks, equipment failures, and physical attacks. As a significant portion of the United States' critical infrastructure is privately owned, there exists a shared responsibility between public agencies and private firms to protect these assets and mitigate the impact of disruptions. National, state, and local emergency managers play a key coordination role in this effort, as they must work collaboratively with a variety of key stakeholders to minimize vulnerabilities and expedite recovery efforts during energy-related emergencies. In Oklahoma, one primary energy security planning group is the Oklahoma State Energy Office (SEO). The Oklahoma SEO represents one of 56 total state and territory energy offices across the United States. SEOs' work is generally under the direction of the governors or legislatures and is funded by both state and federal appropriations. In Oklahoma, the SEO has adopted a team approach to energy security planning that includes multiple entities. This team includes the University of Oklahoma (OU), the Oklahoma Secretary for Energy and Environment, the Office of Emergency Management, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, and private industry energy planners.

The Oklahoma SEO's primary planning partner is the OU Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (IPPRA). IPPRA is an interdisciplinary team with decades of experience in public policy challenges, such as those posed by including areas such as energy policy and emergency management. IPPRA has served as a planning partner to the Oklahoma SEO over the past three energy security planning cycles (~10 years). As part of the Oklahoma energy security planning team, IPPRA has been able to integrate technical and policy expertise while simultaneously fostering strategic coordination and cross-sector collaboration to advance energy security planning strategies. IPPRA extends the SEO's bandwidth as a trusted convener among government agencies, private sector partners, academic institutions, and energy stakeholders with the goal of facilitating the exchange of knowledge, aligning energy security priorities, and promoting a unified approach to address energy security challenges. More information about the Oklahoma SEO can be found here and information about IPPRA can be found here.

One of the primary responsibilities of SEOs is the development and maintenance of a comprehensive State Energy Security Plan (SESP). By law, all states must have an energy security plan, and in Oklahoma, this plan provides a detailed overview of the state energy profile, identifies key stakeholders, outlines operational and response procedures, and provides strategies to bolster energy resilience. With a comprehensive SESP and a robust stakeholder network of energy industry, government, and emergency management professionals actively engaged in energy security planning activities, states' energy systems will be better prepared to meet current and future demands and support the maintenance of secure, reliable, and resilient energy systems.

The U.S. Department of Energy provides guidance for specific elements to be included in SESPs, which is outlined in Section 40108 of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). A brief overview is provided below, but more information can be found here. In total, the six elements that must be addressed include – addressing all energy sources and regulated and unregulated energy providers; providing a state energy profile; addressing potential hazards to each energy sector or system; providing a risk assessment of energy infrastructure; providing a risk mitigation approach to enhance reliability and end use resilience; and

continued on page 21

# The Bar Will Be Raised: Are You a Champion of Collaboration?

**By Jon Bodie, CEM, TEM, Emergency Management Director, Frisco (Texas) Independent School District, and Chairperson, K-12 Education Caucus**

**The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 73rd Annual Conference on Nov. 18 from 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

Best-selling author and marketing guru Seth Godin once said, "*You can raise the bar or wait for others to raise it, but the bar will be raised regardless.*"

This quote, offered in the context of leadership, highlights an important truth: most will meet an expectation placed before them, but few will strive to consistently exceed it.

Emergency management as a professional discipline is at an inflection point. Those who charge ahead in pursuit of information-sharing excellence will become champions of collaboration. For practitioners looking to exceed expectations, the question becomes: What does next-level collaboration look like in practical terms, particularly when it comes to whole community emergency planning?

As an emergency management practitioner with 18 years of experience in the roles of operations section chief, incident management team coordinator, senior program executive, and (most recently) as an emergency management director, I've witnessed a few areas in which we can collectively do better. One of the most critical is regular and ongoing engagement between city/county emergency managers and emergency managers in adjacent fields such as special utility districts or education institutions. Both higher education entities and K-12 school districts serve unique constituencies and protect vulnerable populations. As with municipal and county emergency management agencies, both face man-made, technical, and natural hazards. Ensuring a continuing level of direct engagement, through planning, training, and exercises, can make a real difference in terms of community resilience.

Consider this: Has your agency developed long-standing relationships with emergency management professionals or safety/security representatives from K-12 school districts within your community? More importantly, are the relationships superficial, or limited to a clause in an interlocal agreement allowing school facilities to be used as a mass care resource?

According to FEMA's *A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action* (2011): "*Whole community emergency planning is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. By doing so, a more effective path to societal security and resilience is built*." (p.3)

When implemented effectively, whole community emergency planning strengthens both response and recovery capacity. Yet, while its importance is widely recognized, many jurisdictions lack clear examples of how this collaboration may look at a local level – particularly when it comes to in-depth coordination with K-12 school systems.

One such example comes from the City of Frisco and Frisco Independent School District (FISD). In 2008, they recognized a need to supply first responders with critical incident information through a common operating picture. No commercial product met the need, and city staff quickly realized in-house development of a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) solution would be essential. The result was the Situational Awareness for Emergency Response (SAFER) platform. Since its inception, the SAFER platform has evolved into an award-winning, multilateral program that integrates disparate interagency software systems. This includes floor plan mapping and real-time visualization of 4500+ camera feeds from every FISD facility. Innovation in this area has enabled efficient, real-time collaboration during emergencies, directly improving the safety of students and staff.

As part of the SAFER partnership, Frisco Fire Department (FFD) visits all 78 FISD campuses annually to test the SAFER system during mandated monthly school fire drills. These visits, conducted by FFD crews assigned to the nearest FFD station, include observation of a campus fire evacuation drill. Other steps during the visit include an alert latency test, which measures the time from fire alarm activation to the public safety answering point (PSAP) to the FFD crew observing the drill. This approach verifies alarm equipment viability, reliability of alert pathways, and crew familiarity with campus evacuation

continued on page 21

## Champion of Collaboration?

continued from page 20

procedures. These annual visits serve as a prime example of next-level collaboration to safeguard vulnerable community populations.

Preparedness phase collaboration extends beyond fire safety. Each school year, the Frisco Police Department (FPD) delivers customized active threat training sessions for all FISD employees at their assigned campuses. This training, which strengthens resilience and readiness for potential active threat incidents, is aligned with the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT)™ standards.

In July of 2021, FISD and the Frisco Fire Department (including Frisco's emergency management team) partnered to conduct a full-scale, active threat/parent reunification exercise. Scheduled to occur in June of 2022, the exercise was officially named *Wolverine Ready* (a nod to the impacted FISD high school's mascot).

Objectives and capability targets adopted by FPD and FFD would be focused on the Rescue Task Force (RTF) concept and implementation of Active Attack Integrated Response (AAIR) principles at the impacted school.

Objectives and capability targets for FISD included:

- An assessment of the ability of the campus to rapidly enact emergency protective measures.
- Activation of designated district personnel assigned to the FISD district Reunification Support Team (RST).
- Activation and timed configuration of the pre-determined reunification high school site.
- Transport of impacted students to the reunification site using FISD bus assets.
- Overall incident coordination and integration with unified command.

To ensure realism of exercise play, pre-determined injects included missing student siblings, evacuation of physically and intellectually disabled students, and panicked parents with limited or no English proficiency.

*Wolverine Ready* brought together over 300 players from 6 contributing agencies. Using Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) practices throughout the 11-month planning timetable allowed for organized preparation and smooth operations on gameday. HSEEP also served to effectively document critical details of the exercise, including aspects related to hotwash/after-action data collection and improvement planning.

The outcome: FPD and FFD found 24 areas needing adjustment or correction. FISD documented 46 areas in need of adjustment. Through close coordination and planning for *Wolverine Ready*, participating entities discovered capacity and capability shortfalls that have now served to inform updated emergency plans.

Emergency management today requires more than individual expertise; it demands a champion's mindset centered on collaboration, communication, and coordination. If your agency seeks to elevate whole community planning, consider strengthening relationships with K-12 school districts or other political subdivisions in your area of responsibility. Whole community planning is not a one-time effort, but an ongoing commitment to local partnerships. Our shared safety depends on whether we collectively meet expectations or raise the bar by exceeding them. 🔷

### References

A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action, FEMA, 2011 from https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/whole_community_dec2011__2.pdf

## Navigating Energy Security Planning

continued from page 19

providing details of regional coordination, planning and response.

In Oklahoma, the State Energy Office specializes in a coordinating and convening role, with a focus on coordination amongst emergency managers, ESF-12 partners, and tribal entities throughout the planning process. Additionally, Oklahoma includes and references industry best practices for energy security planning, integrating these throughout the planning process and sharing them with stakeholders whenever possible. Presently, ongoing communication and collaboration efforts have been implemented following the updated plan's approval in 2024. This includes the initial implementation of the State's 5-Year Strategic Plan for energy security planning, with a focus on further stakeholder engagement, leadership in convening and coordination, enhancing the availability and use of energy security data, and supporting risk mitigation efforts in energy security. This strategic plan will guide energy planning efforts to ensure compliance with Oklahoma's SESP and continue to support the maintenance of secure, reliable, and resilient energy systems. 🔷

# A Multi-Hazard Emergency Training Halt: An Emergency Management Crisis

**By Yvonne Dadson, MPA, MPhil, Doctoral Student, Research Project Assistant - Extreme Events, Social Equity and Technology Lab, College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity, University at Albany-SUNY, IAEM Full-time Graduate Student Scholarship ($2,500)**

As Hurricane Idalia approached Florida's Big Bend area in August, local emergency managers were able to make lifesaving, timely decisions to evacuate the right neighborhoods first, when to notify state leadership, and how to activate mutual aid agreements in real time, using federal training they had received over many years. The local managers understood the pipeline of knowledge shared through the presentations delivered by FEMA via the National Hurricane Center, and the local and state emergency managers had developed reliable and trusted professional relationships through federally funded disaster preparedness conferences. Now we face an emergency management crisis in which many in emergency management have lost confidence in the shared knowledge pipeline used and relied upon throughout the country.

Federal disaster training is completely gone, which is alarming to see given hurricane season is upon us after long lag of little to no training for current and former officials, as well as, local and tribal emergency managers. Based on the statements of current and former officials, along with various emails and memos, FEMA is severely limiting its training with state and local emergency managers, while meteorologists are predicting a busier than average Atlantic hurricane season with 17 named tropical storms, including 9 hurricanes (Douglas et al., 2025), all at the worst possible time for the emergency management community.

FEMA employees are grounded from any non-disaster deployment travel and have been since February 5. All training travel requests are required to pass through the Office of External

Affairs for approval beginning in early March and most speaking requests are denied. As of now, ALL FEMA employees are banned from training and conferences, even virtually (Douglas et al., 2025). FEMA has unilaterally decided to cancel all National Fire Academy training programs where employees were required to testify in person. Notifications indicate FEMA is still evaluating programs and costs to ensure they are in line within administrative priorities. Steve Still, emergency manager for New Hanover County along North Carolina's hurricane corridor, summed it up: "If there's any practical applications or exercises, you need face to face training" (Douglas et al., 2025). Virtual training cannot compensate for trust-building gaps and experiential learning emergency managers need to collaborate when real disasters occur.

## Observing the Dissolution of a Professionally Networked Community

As the recipient of Walmart's 2025 Empowering Community Resilience Award at the National VOAD conference in Louisville, Kentucky and the student's presenter at the National Hurricane Conference in New Orleans earlier this year, I was observing this institutional disintegration during the event. What I saw was unthinkable and incredibly sad. The National Hurricane Conference, the most recognized event for hurricane preparedness for an average of 2,500 emergency management professionals a year, lacked its most critical participants. The brand-new student poster session was officially cancelled because FEMA staff (who were slated to moderate) were unable to participate because the department had suspended all travel (Douglas et al., 2025).

Not only did the conferences face lost opportunities for professional development, but we also witnessed the failed development of future emergency managers. FEMA-led sessions were cancelled, including the training on evacuation timelines during hurricanes. Former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate explained: "I'm just not aware of any other time that the hurricane center staff weren't at that conference" (Green, 2025).

## Not Just Canceled Meetings—Life or Death Decisions

These are life-or-death decisions, not canceled meetings. Bryan Koon, formerly Florida Division of Emergency Management director, said he couldn't "predict if there is training on new forecasting models, there may just not be appropriate information available to the public prior to a hurricane" (Douglas et al., 2025). When the next major hurricane occurs, emergency managers may make evacuation decisions using invalid

continued on page 23

## Multi-Hazard Emergency Training Halt

continued from page 22

planning models, outdated storm surge knowledge, and fail to coordinate with federal resources without professional networking.

The impact goes beyond hurricanes. A few years ago, during the 2021 winter storm in Texas, the collaboration between the federal government, state government, and local government was critical for a community to survive. I was a master's student at the University of North Texas when this event occurred, and I observed the ways in which the lives of individuals and families were saved due to the cooperation across all levels of government when traditional methods failed. Future emergency managers may also fail to request assistance from federal agencies during catastrophic events if they do not have training in the protocols of the federal government. This is already a difficult situation with the internal issues the state of FEMA is facing. Documents obtained by CNN indicated, "Hurricane preparedness was in a state of halt this year because of other business matters, including staffing and contracts," and FEMA is struggling with more than a 30 percent vacancy and readiness rate (Cohen, 2025).

## The Emergency Management Training Partnership Act Solution

Instead of creating expensive federal programs, Congress should support the Emergency Management Training Partnership Act (EMTPA) outlining immediate reforms while creating public/private partnerships to restore and sustain emergency management training programs at minimal taxpayer cost. The EMTPA consists of three complementary pieces leveraging existing resources:

- **Immediate Training Access Mitigation** would officially end current federal travel restrictions on emergency management training and professional development. This requires no new funds, simply reverting to previous policy allowing federal personnel, including FEMA and National Hurricane Center staff, to attend essential training conferences, workshops, and seminars. This component will supplement virtual training capabilities through existing federal information technology infrastructure (FEMA, 2024).
- **University Training Consortium** would establish opportunities where FEMA partners with National Disaster and Emergency Management University and established academic institutions providing essential training when federal personnel are unavailable. Many universities currently provide emergency management education supporting established programs with existing state and local emergency management agency relationships. This leverages existing academic infrastructure rather than creating new federal training sites, running through existing Emergency Management Performance Grant funding without requiring additional federal appropriations (FEMA, 2024).
- **Professional Association Training Management Initiative** would engage respected professional organizations like the International Association of Emergency Managers and National Emergency Management Association to coordinate training delivery partnered with federal resources. These organizations have comprehensive certification programs and continuing professional development standards demonstrating they can deliver emergency management education credentials (IAEM, 2024).

## Why This Approach is Effective

This approach is economical and implementable without new federal expenditures. The National Institute of Building Sciences determined every $1 spent on hazard mitigation saves $6 in disaster costs, a 600% return on investment (Lightbody & Fuchs, 2018). The EMTPA accomplishes preparedness investment benefits without requiring new appropriations, optimizing existing expenditures. This approach respects budget restraints and federalism principles.

The EMTPA does not expand federal control scope but improves existing partnerships with state, local, academic, and professional organizations possessing emergency management expertise. Functional emergency management training programs structure and improve professional readiness (Lin et al., 2024). Established professional emergency management organizations developed training programs with certification credentials for each emergency management cycle (IAEM, 2024). Universities with established emergency management programs train future emergency managers, conduct research, and collaborate with practitioners.

National Emergency Management Association President Lynn Budd highlighted: "There is expertise provided by FEMA for state and local jurisdictions that the states simply don't have at this time" (Douglas et al., 2025). The EMTPA would maintain that expertise through established and new options while enhancing state and local capabilities.

## Implementation Strategy

The EMTPA is immediately implementable with executive action and legislative authorization. Phase 1

continued on page 24

## Multi-Hazard Emergency Training Halt

continued from page 23

reverses travel restrictions through administrative policy changes requiring no congressional action or additional funding. Phase 2 formalizes consortium partnerships using EMPG resources and other federal funding structures. Phase 3 authorizes professional associations delivering training through existing cooperative agreement authorities, allowing organizations like IAEM and NEMA to represent federal curriculum when necessary.

### The Urgency to Act

Each passing day increases risk to American communities and deepens national resilience erosion. Climate change drives storms to new destructive levels while destroying traditional professional knowledge networks underpinning effective response. The current hurricane season approaches with federal agencies declaring they are "not ready" while emergency managers are blocked from needed training. Congress must act before the next hurricane; earthquake or wildfire exposes our unpreparedness. Every American community's safety rest upon effective emergency managers knowing their jobs when it matters most. Politics cannot sacrifice this essential responsibility. American lives depend upon comprehensive federal action through the Emergency Management Training Partnership Act preventing our emergency management system from being unprepared for all hazards. 🔷

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# Funding Local Emergency Management

**By Gregory M. Godish, CEM, Columbia Southern University, Ph.D. candidate, Emergency Management, Recipient of IAEM Full-time Graduate Scholarship ($3,500)**

A lack of support, specifically funding for local emergency management programs, continues to hinder disaster preparedness and mitigation and will do so in the future if not addressed. Given recent proposed changes in emergency preparedness and within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), further research is warranted to help guide and inform future emergency management operations. Local emergency management offices are the front lines of disaster preparedness and response. In New Jersey, where every municipality is required by law to appoint an Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC), the reality is that many of these offices operate under significant financial strain. Inadequate funding at the local level hinders the effectiveness of emergency management programs, affecting staffing, training, facilities, and compliance with state and federal requirements. FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell stated that disasters occur year-round, and emergency management is maxed out (King, 2025).

Disasters begin and end at the local level. FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell reinforced this by stating, "It is the community itself that lives with the consequences" (FEMA, 2022, p. 4). Unfortunately, many local elected officials only recognize the value of emergency management during the response or recovery phases. As Krueger et al. (2009) noted, effective emergency management encompasses all four phases: preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. When local programs lack funding, their ability to perform across these phases is severely compromised. As King (2025, p. 11) points out, "Every dollar spent on disaster relief operations represents a failure to address the underlying conditions that created vulnerability in the first place." The federal government has found that most disaster funding is allocated to recovery efforts (King, 2025). The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) advocates that emergency management is a core government function requiring appropriate resources (NEMA, 2023). Although their recommendations focus on state-level programs, they are equally applicable at the municipal level. Without sustained investment, local programs cannot meet the demands of an increasingly complex threat environment.

The New Jersey Civilian Defense and Disaster Control Act and New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) Directives provide the qualifications and responsibilities for EMCs. Despite these expectations, many programs struggle to meet basic standards due to financial limitations. In New Jersey, many emergency managers are part-time coordinators spending 10 or fewer hours per week on emergency management. Most also held primary roles in police, fire, or public works. With such limited time and staffing, municipal OEMs face an uphill battle meeting their responsibilities. Most of the local OEMs have budgets under $10,000. Grant funding remains an untapped resource, with many receiving no grant funds due to a lack of time, awareness, or training. Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) were often makeshift, with many sharing spaces with courtrooms or administrative offices.

Many municipal emergency management programs are understaffed, lack resources, and are not a priority of elected officials. Despite growing demands, emergency management remains a part-time or volunteer role in many communities. Coordinators often juggle significant responsibilities with little compensation, minimal support staff, and inadequate resources. The perception that emergency management only matters during the response phase downplays the critical work done in the preparedness and mitigation phases. Emergency managers need dedicated time and funding to strengthen OEM programs in all phases of disaster management. Without this, communities are more vulnerable to the impacts of disasters and then the burden is placed on the states and federal government to respond.

To address these challenges, the following actions can assist in securing the resources needed to manage an emergency management program properly. Emergency managers must educate elected officials on the importance of emergency management and its requirements. Elected officials must recognize the importance of emergency management and establish full-time OEMs or create shared services across municipalities to pool resources. Access to grant resources and grant training would be beneficial. Update to state laws and directives must reflect emergency management ever changing mission and scope. Funding needs to flow down to the local level to build resilient communities, where disasters begin and end. The federal and state governments should mandate a minimum funding threshold for municipal OEMs and allocate a designated block grant program to support

continued on page 26

## Funding Local Emergency Management

continued from page 25

operational capabilities. Establishing regional OEM partnerships through shared services could significantly enhance local capabilities, particularly for small municipalities with limited tax bases. This model has seen success in several New Jersey counties, where resource sharing has allowed for dedicated planning staff, grant management, and EOC improvements. Additionally, the federal government could create a grant to support full-time staffing modeled after the Assistance to Firefighters grant. The March 2025 Executive Order issued by the White House on "Achieving Efficiency Through State and Local Preparedness" emphasizes that preparedness is most effective when led by state, local, and individual stakeholders, with federal support (King, 2025). This order will hopefully have a direct impact on strengthen local emergency management.

## Conclusion

A lack of support, specifically funding for local emergency management programs, continues to hinder disaster preparedness and mitigation and will do so in the future if not addressed. Local emergency management programs are struggling with inadequate funding that limits their ability to meet basic program requirements. Without immediate attention and investment, local governments risk being unprepared for the next disaster and will continue to rely on states and the federal government to recover. As King (2025) argued, disaster management needs to be refocused so that the federal government responds primarily to catastrophic events that are truly beyond the capabilities of state and local governments. Further research is needed on how the lack of funding impacts local capabilities and the ability of local OEMs to perform emergency management functions adequately. The research must identify how properly funding local OEMs will build local capabilities and minimize the need for state and federal assistance in most disasters. As natural hazards grow in frequency and severity, the federal government has a strategic opportunity to invest in local preparedness as a frontline defense. Prioritizing funding at the municipal level will not only reduce federal disaster costs but also empower communities to become more self-reliant, adaptive, and resilient. 🔷

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# E.L Quarantelli's Sociological Contributions to Disaster Management: Critical Analysis and Contemporary Relevance

**By S. Elise Hayes, M.A., Ph.D Candidate, APIO, Assistant Director of Community Preparedness, Johnson County KS, Emergency Management, Ph.D. Candidate at Oklahoma State University, Recipient of the 2025 Dr. E.L. Quarantelli Scholarship ($10,000)**

E.L. Quarantelli is recognized as a foundational figure in disaster and emergency management, notably for his sociological approach that transformed scholarly and practical understandings of disasters. His pioneering work emphasized social behaviors and institutional roles, challenging traditional perceptions of disaster responses and significantly influencing modern emergency management. This paper critically analyzes Quarantelli's contributions, examines the influence of his theories on contemporary policies and practices, discusses limitations, and explores how technological advancements, climate science, and global risk management may necessitate an expansion of his foundational theories.

## Sociological Framework and Theoretical Contributions

E.L. Quarantelli's foremost contribution to the field of disaster studies lies in his foundational role in establishing a sociological framework for the systematic study of disasters, most notably through the co-founding of the Disaster Research Center (DRC) in 1963 alongside Russell Dynes. Prior to this paradigm shift, disaster research was predominantly situated within the domains of engineering, civil defense, and the natural sciences, focusing largely on physical infrastructure failure, hazard modeling, and technical mitigation strategies. Quarantelli's work was instrumental in repositioning disasters as fundamentally social phenomena, thereby redirecting scholarly inquiry toward the behaviors, institutions, and systemic responses that shape both the immediate and long-term consequences of disaster events (Quarantelli, 1988).

Through extensive empirical research and field-based studies, Quarantelli advanced the understanding that disasters are characterized not only by physical destruction but also by significant social disruption. He challenged prevailing misconceptions—such as the assumption that mass panic is a common reaction to catastrophes by demonstrating that individuals and groups often respond with rationality, cooperation, and altruism. His exploration of emergent collective behavior and the spontaneous formation of new social groups during crises introduced a more nuanced understanding of human adaptability and resilience. Additionally, Quarantelli's typologies of organizational behavior under stress provided critical insights into the performance of formal and informal institutions during disaster response and recovery. His analyses revealed how organizational effectiveness is frequently contingent upon pre-existing structures, leadership capacity, and the ability to coordinate across multiple agencies and sectors (Quarantelli, 1988).

Quarantelli further contributed to the development of disaster typologies and conceptual models that distinguish between natural disasters, technological emergencies, and complex humanitarian crises. He emphasized the centrality of contextual factor – including socio-cultural dynamics, institutional frameworks, and governance structures – in shaping both vulnerability and adaptive responses to disasters. This nuanced perspective highlighted the inherently interdisciplinary nature of disaster research, advocating for holistic and inclusive approaches to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. By effectively bridging theoretical constructs with practical applications, Quarantelli transcended academic boundaries to profoundly influence public policy, emergency management protocols, and disaster preparedness systems globally. His seminal contributions established foundational principles that continue to underpin contemporary approaches in disaster risk reduction, resilience-building strategies, and community-based disaster management initiatives. His legacy continues to inform contemporary approaches to disaster risk reduction, resilience planning, and community-based strategies for coping with extreme events (Quarantelli, 1988).

## Challenging Conventional Wisdom

A significant and enduring theoretical contribution from E.L. Quarantelli was his rigorous delineation between disasters and routine emergencies—a conceptual distinction that reshaped the foundational understanding of emergency management and disaster sociology. Quarantelli (1997) argued that

continued on page 28

## E.L Quarantelli's Sociological Contributions

continued from page 27

disasters are not merely amplified versions of routine emergencies, but rather represent qualitatively distinct phenomena that overwhelm existing institutional capacities and necessitate emergent, adaptive responses. Unlike routine emergencies, which can typically be managed through predefined protocols and hierarchical command structures, disasters often produce conditions of uncertainty, disruption, and complexity that require spontaneous role shifts, emergent coordination networks, and bottom-up innovation among both formal and informal actors. This perspective directly challenged the dominant mechanistic paradigms of the time, which favored rigid command-and-control approaches modeled after military or bureaucratic systems. Instead, Quarantelli, alongside Russell Dynes, advanced a more sociologically grounded framework that emphasized the need for flexibility, improvisation, and decentralized decision-making as vital elements of effective disaster response (Dynes & Quarantelli, 1976).

In addition to this structural critique, Quarantelli played a pivotal role in dismantling enduring myths that had long distorted public perceptions and policy responses to disasters. Chief among these was the myth of widespread panic, looting, and antisocial behavior during crises. Through extensive empirical fieldwork across dozens of disaster events, Quarantelli (1986) demonstrated that the prevailing societal narrative of chaos and disorder was not only misleading but actively harmful to effective preparedness and response. His findings consistently revealed patterns of pro-social behavior, spontaneous volunteerism, community solidarity, and resilience in the face of catastrophic disruption. This research reframed the discourse around human behavior in disasters, undermining the justification for overly coercive or paternalistic emergency policies that prioritized control over collaboration. In turn, Quarantelli's work catalyzed a paradigm shift in emergency management by underscoring the importance of cultivating community trust, leveraging local knowledge, and designing preparedness strategies that empower rather than constrain affected populations. His contributions continue to influence contemporary disaster policy by reinforcing the centrality of social capital, local agency, and adaptive capacity in fostering resilient communities.

## Influence on Contemporary Emergency Management Policies

Quarantelli's empirical and theoretical contributions have exerted a profound influence on the evolution of contemporary emergency management practices, particularly in the integration of sociological principles into operational frameworks. His findings underscored the necessity of understanding disasters as socially constructed events, shaped by institutional dynamics, community behaviors, and systemic vulnerabilities. These insights informed the development and refinement of pivotal emergency management systems in the United States, including the Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), both of which emphasize the importance of coordinated, multi-agency responses and adaptable organizational structures (Waugh, 2006). These frameworks reflect Quarantelli's recognition of the complex, often emergent nature of disaster response, advocating for interagency collaboration, decentralized decision-making, and scalable command structures capable of accommodating a wide range of incident types and magnitudes.

Furthermore, Quarantelli's work contributed to a broader policy shift toward the incorporation of community-level capacities into disaster planning and recovery. His emphasis on emergent behaviors and grassroots organizational responses laid the groundwork for recognizing the critical role of social capital, local knowledge, and informal networks in enhancing resilience and facilitating recovery. Contemporary scholarship and policy, as reflected in Aldrich's (2012) work on social capital, now explicitly acknowledge the importance of fostering community cohesion and leveraging local assets as integral components of effective disaster risk reduction strategies.

Quarantelli's influence also extends to the international sphere, where his foundational ideas resonate within global frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030). The Sendai Framework emphasizes the centrality of local engagement, community resilience, and the strengthening of institutional capacities—principles closely aligned with Quarantelli's long-standing advocacy for people-centered, socially grounded approaches to disaster management. In sum, his work has not only transformed academic discourse but also reshaped practical methodologies, informing both national and international efforts to build more adaptive, inclusive, and socially responsive disaster management systems (Quarantelli, 1997).

## Limitations of Quarantelli's Work

Despite Quarantelli's foundational role in shaping the field of disaster sociology, his work is not without critical limitations that merit

continued on page 29

## E.L Quarantelli's Sociological Contributions

continued from page 28

scholarly attention. One of the most frequently cited critiques centers on the temporal scope of his research, particularly its predominant emphasis on the immediate response phase of disasters. While Quarantelli's contributions to understanding emergent group behavior, spontaneous volunteerism, and ad hoc organizational coordination during crises are seminal, they often came at the expense of a more sustained exploration into the long-term processes of recovery. As Tierney (2007) and other scholars have noted, disaster recovery encompasses prolonged and uneven trajectories marked by complex socio-economic restructuring, psychological trauma, displacement, and policy failures – domains that Quarantelli's theoretical frameworks only partially engaged. This analytical gap necessitates the integration of complementary paradigms, such as vulnerability theory, political economy, and post-disaster governance models, to adequately address the chronic dimensions of disaster impact and recovery.

The epistemological and technological context in which Quarantelli formulated his theories presents another area of limitation. Much of his work was developed during the mid to late 20th century—prior to the exponential rise of global interconnectivity, digital infrastructures, and transboundary risks. As such, while his typologies and concepts remain foundational, they were conceived in a socio-technological landscape markedly different from the one emergency managers and disaster scholars confront today. For instance, contemporary hazards such as cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, climate-induced displacement, and the cascading effects of globalization introduce novel forms of vulnerability and complexity that strain traditional sociological models of disaster (Quarantelli, 1997). Furthermore, the rise of real-time information dissemination through social media and artificial intelligence-driven data analytics challenge the assumptions of information flow, situational awareness, and organizational adaptability that underpinned earlier models of emergent behavior. Consequently, while Quarantelli's work remains indispensable for its theoretical clarity and empirical richness, it must be critically extended, recontextualized, and synthesized with emerging scholarship to more fully account for the multifaceted nature of 21st-century disaster risk, resilience, and recovery (Tierney, 2007).

## Expanding Quarantelli's Theories with Modern Developments

Advancements in digital communication and artificial intelligence (AI) necessitate revisions to traditional sociological frameworks. Social media facilitates rapid information dissemination, real-time disaster tracking, and community mobilization, extending beyond Quarantelli's initial observations of social behavior (Houston et al., 2015). Predictive analytics powered by AI enhance emergency preparedness and response precision, areas previously underrepresented in sociological disaster theories.

Climate change introduces increased disaster frequency and intensity, prompting calls for frameworks integrating sustainability, vulnerability reduction, and proactive mitigation alongside responsive capacities emphasized by Quarantelli (Birkmann et al., 2013). Long-term adaptive resilience and preparedness strategies are essential to address contemporary disaster complexities.

Emerging global risks—such as pandemics, cyber threats, and climate-induced disasters—require broader frameworks integrating global governance, technological innovation, and transnational collaboration (Beck, 2009). These globalized risks underscore the need to expand Quarantelli's sociological insights to accommodate the interconnected and complex nature of modern disasters.

## Case Studies

Hurricane Katrina exemplifies both the strengths and limitations of Quarantelli's sociological frameworks. Initially, the rigid hierarchical response failed due to the magnitude of disaster, reinforcing Quarantelli's argument for flexible, emergent community responses. Communities indeed, displayed pro-social behavior, organizing spontaneous rescue and relief efforts that significantly complemented formal disaster responses. However, Katrina also exposed the limitations of solely emphasizing immediate responses without adequate attention to pre-disaster vulnerabilities and long-term recovery, highlighting socio-economic and racial disparities that intensified disaster impacts and necessitated structured long-term recovery efforts (Tierney, 2014).

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the need to expand traditional disaster management theories to global scales and novel risks. Initially, many countries applied rigid, centralized control measures, with mixed effectiveness. The pandemic revealed strengths in community resilience and spontaneous local-level responses, consistent with Quarantelli's observations. However, the global nature of the pandemic illustrated the essential role of international cooperation, coordinated global governance, and reliance on digital technologies for response management, exceeding the local

continued on page 30

## E.L Quarantelli's Sociological Contributions

continued from page 29

and national frameworks central to Quarantelli's original research. COVID-19 necessitated adaptive governance models and emphasized preparedness and long-term risk management strategies beyond immediate crisis response (Beck, 2009).

## Conclusion

E.L. Quarantelli's sociological contributions significantly reshaped disaster management by emphasizing social behaviors, community resilience, and institutional adaptability. Although foundational, modern developments necessitate expanding his theories to integrate technological innovations, climate science complexities, and global interconnectedness. By synthesizing Quarantelli's foundational insights with contemporary dynamics, disaster management can enhance both immediate responsiveness and long-term resilience.🔷

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# No One Left Behind: A Proactive and Inclusive Approach to Crisis Communication

**By Stephanie King, Doctoral Candidate in Public Affairs, University of Central Florida, Recipient of IAEM-Women in the Field of Emergency Management (WTFEM) Full-time Graduate Student Scholarship, funded through a dedicated donation by the organization, WTFEM ($4,000)**

Emergency management continues to evolve in response to new technologies, threats and lessons learned, yet it continues to face new challenges. A major issue facing emergency management today is ensuring that there is effective crisis communication. Crisis communication is a critical role of Emergency Information Management (EIM) which involves the process of collecting important information, decision making, and sharing information with the public (Kapucu, Berman, & Wang, 2008). Messages received can shape public understanding of risks and impact behavior during a crisis, including preparedness and compliance (Hasan, & Ukkusuri, 2011; Perry & Lindell, 1991). The devastation to life and property that can result from consequences of emergencies, including public health crisis to disasters, highlights the importance of the public listening to, preparing and acting on crisis communication. Ultimately, crisis communication aims to reduce harm and damage during an emergency (Nigg, 1995). However, as emergency management moves into a modern era, and emergencies become more complex, ensuring that communication is both effective and widely received by communities is a continuing challenge.

Challenges to effective crisis communication include public trust, spread of misinformation, and cultural barriers. In crisis communication, trust is shaped by shared values between the messenger and the audience. Trust influences how people seek and process information (Capurro, Maier, Tustin, Jardine, & Driedger, 2022; Siegrist & Zingg, 2014). Furthermore, when the public trusts the source, they are more likely to prepare, act and comply, which is crucial when government help may be delayed (Basolo, Steinberg, Burby, Levine, Cruz, & Huang, 2009). Another barrier in effective communication during a crisis is misinformation, which can cause confusion. This becomes a bigger challenge when false information spreads faster than official government communication during a crisis. In addition to misinformation, cultural and social differences can influence how people receive and respond to crisis communication, increasing vulnerability (Yeo, Li, Shin, & Haup, 2017).

As a result of the complex nature of emergencies, the modern field of emergency management continues to face challenges in crisis communication. To address this critical issue, a federal policy is proposed, with clear mandates on how crisis communication is handled during emergencies. Key components include trusted local authorities delivering coordinated emergency messages while collaborating with leaders representing cross-cultural governance stakeholders. The policy also includes real-time social media monitoring to quickly correct misinformation and requires the use of both modern and traditional communication channels to reach all community members, regardless of age, culture, or technology access. This proposed policy can proactively, support public trust and improve the accuracy of information, ultimately influencing preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.
The next sections of this paper will include key challenges and potential impact, proposed policy, and impact to the emergency management field and the community, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

## Key Challenges and Potential Impacts

- **Public Trust**: Trust is essential for effective communication, and for a message to be effective, it is crucial for the spokesperson to be trustworthy (Kasperson, Golding, & Tuler, 1992). People assess the trustworthiness and usefulness of a message based on their evaluation of the source delivering it (Griffin, Dunwoody, and Neuwirth, 1999). Subsequently, trusted communication and its perception influences actions taken by the community, playing a critical role in safety measures and compliance. If there is no trust, it leads to a lack of credibility, influencing risk perception, and behavior such as preparedness and compliance. The consequences of not trusting emergency messages can put people in grave danger during a disaster or crisis. One example is Hurricane Maria, where trust played a critical role, influencing risk preparedness, response and recovery efforts, deepening public distrust due to government delays (Smith, 2019).
- **Misinformation during an Emergency**: Misinformation, especially from government sources, can also severely hinder crisis communication during emergencies, undermining risk preparedness, response, and compliance.

continued on page 32

## Inclusive Approach to Crisis Communication

continued from page 31

Additionally, when officials spread incorrect information, it causes confusion, puts residents at risk, and erodes trust, jeopardizing future cooperation. The consequences of misinformation were evident during Hurricane Katrina, where poor government communication, technological failures, and misinterpreted information led to loss of life and severe devastation (Garnett & Kousmin, 2007). Likewise, misinformation and rumors spread on social media can create fear, hinder preparedness, and undermine effective response efforts (Vosoughi & Aral, 2018). In the current modern era, the rapid spread of information through social media presents serious challenges for managing misinformation and ensuring effective crisis communication.

- **Cultural Barriers**: Despite living in a technological era, cultural barriers to effective crisis communication persist, both online and offline, highlighting the need for diverse approaches to communication during emergencies. Cultural barriers, such as language differences, cultural norms, values, and levels of trust, along with demographic factors like age, socioeconomic status, and education, play a key role in emergency vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities can shape how communities receive, interpret, and respond to crisis information. Effective communication must reach diverse groups, as culture is a crucial component in how messages are understood and acted upon (Yeo, Knox, & Jung, 2018). Research shows that racial and ethnic minorities are generally less likely than non-Hispanic Whites to engage in disaster preparedness (Burke, Bethel, & Britt, 2012; Maldonado, Collins, & Grineski, 2016; Perry, Lindell, & Greene, 1982). These disparities may stem from differences in how individuals interpret and respond to crisis communication, which is influenced by their cultural, religious, social, and organizational backgrounds (Yeo, Li, Shin, & Haup, 2017). In addition, past experiences, generational differences and preferred communication methods vary across populations, further influencing how crisis information is received and acted upon.

## Policy Proposal

The proposed policy is a federal initiative that takes a proactive approach, designed to ensure consistent emergency communication across the nation. The policy would be implemented at the local level, with uniform guidelines applied across states and federal funding supporting local implementation to meet community specific needs. The policy requires trusted local authorities to deliver coordinated emergency messages while collaborating with leaders from diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. The collaboration will ensure that all populations and groups receive inclusive emergency messages, by delivering emergency messages tailored by language, age, and communication preferences. Furthermore, the policy requires real-time social media monitoring to quickly correct misinformation and it allows for two-way communication with the public. Research supports cross-sector collaboration to address complex community challenges (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006), while social media offers effective, interactive platforms for risk communication (Yeo, Knox, & Hu, 2022). Furthermore, accurate messaging can counter misinformation, as shown during COVID-19 (Wang, 2022). It is imperative to recognize the modern era of emergency communication; however, traditional methods of communication must still be used to ensure inclusive outreach, making effective communication crisis communication a hybrid proactive approach.

## Impact on the Emergency Management Field and Community

The proposed policy will significantly benefit both the field of emergency management and community well-being by promoting a proactive and inclusive approach to crisis communication. By ensuring that all populations, regardless of language, age, culture, or communication preference, receive timely, accurate, and culturally relevant emergency messages, this policy supports the core functions of emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Additionally, including trusted leaders to help deliver emergency messages will result in an increase in public compliance with safety directives like evacuations. Sadri, Ukkusuri, and Gladwin (2017) find that decisions during crises are influenced by both individual and social factors, making tailored communication essential and potentially lifesaving

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to effective crisis communication. This policy addresses challenges with a proactive, hybrid approach that fosters collaboration between local authorities and diverse community leaders to build trust, enhance message credibility, and counter misinformation. Transparency is key to building trust, especially in democratic societies where public understanding influences emergency responses (Heng & de Moor, 2003). By fostering a crisis communication system that is inclusive and community rooted, this policy strengthens every phase of emergency management and helps create more resilient, informed

continued on page 33

## Inclusive Approach to Crisis Communication

continued from page 32

communities ready to respond and recover.

## Conclusion

Effective crisis communication is essential to saving lives and reducing harm during emergencies. As disasters grow more complex, the need for timely, accurate, and culturally sensitive messages is greater than ever (Kapucu, Berman, & Wang, 2008). Trust plays a central role, when messages come from respected local leaders, communities are more likely to listen, prepare, and act (Kasperson, Golding, & Tuler, 1992; Sadri, Ukkusuri, & Gladwin, 2017). However, rapid spread of misinformation can undermine that trust, creating confusion and encouraging unsafe behavior (Wang, Gao, & Gao, 2022). Emergency managers must be proactive in monitoring and correcting false information in real time. To truly reach and support all populations, communication strategies must combine modern technology like social media with traditional methods such as radio, television, and community outreach (Knox, 2013; Yeo, Knox, & Jung, 2018). The proposed policy promotes an inclusive, collaborative approach, addressing misinformation and ensuring emergency messages reach everyone. To uphold emergency management's core mission of protecting all lives with no one left behind, organizations must remain proactive, inclusive, and continually reassess strategies to meet evolving community needs across all phases of emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.🔷

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# EM Calendar

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|---|---|
| Nov. 14-20 | 2025 IAEM Annual Conference<br>Louisville, Kentucky |
| Nov. 21-22 | EMAP Emergency Management Standard Training Course<br>Louisville Metro Emergency Management Agency<br>Louisville, Kentucky |
| Dec 1-3 | National Healthcare Coalition Preparedness Conference 2025<br>Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center<br>Grapevine, Texas |

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