


IAEM

Bulletin

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National Emergency Management Awareness Month: Celebrating a Successful First Year

The International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) proudly celebrates the inaugural National Emergency Management Awareness Month (NEMAM), held throughout August 2025. This coordinated, industry-wide effort was created to emphasize the vital role of emergency managers and spotlight the profession's contributions across all sectors. From local governments to the private sector, the campaign clearly resonated within the emergency management community and beyond.

Emergency Management Participation

Participation by the emergency management community, especially IAEM members, raised awareness of the profession in communities worldwide. Emergency managers across the globe organized and registered **102 events** with IAEM, collectively reaching more than **6,500 attendees**. This represents only some of the activities. Google searches and social media monitoring demonstrated many events, proclamations, and social campaigns were not officially registered with IAEM.

Activities ranged from open houses and public presentations to interactive community events such

as “Touch-a-Truck” demonstrations and preparedness drills. Many jurisdictions also hosted meetings with elected officials and offered tours of Emergency Operations Centers.

This diverse mix of activities showcased the creativity and commitment of the profession. Open houses and community outreach efforts encouraged direct engagement with the public, while training sessions, presentations, and exercises reinforced preparedness and resilience, especially at the local level. Collectively, these events provided opportunities to highlight the scope of emergency management and to connect with residents, policymakers, and partners in meaningful ways.

Visit a special booth in the registration area at the IAEM Conference, Nov. 14-20, 2025, in Louisville, Kentucky, to see many of the proclamations, social media campaigns, and activities from the month.

NEMAM Expanded IAEM's Reach and Engagement

IAEM's digital platforms served as the foundation for NEMAM's success. Across Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, IAEM and its partners achieved substantial growth in visibility and engagement:

■ **Facebook:** 120,609 views and

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National Emergency Management Awareness Month

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more than 56,000 in reach, with top-performing posts—including the launch video and August 1 welcome post—collectively garnering over 52,000 views.

■ **LinkedIn:** 64,613 impressions and 11,849 link clicks in August, supported by strong reposts from members and partner organizations. The launch video received more than 11,000 views alone.

■ **Instagram:** Over 60,000 views and 2,041 interactions, with the launch video generating 126,000 views across July and August.

These numbers reflect not only IAEM's expanded audience but also the dedication of emergency managers who shared campaign messages with their networks.

Demonstrating Global Success

The campaign's influence extended beyond IAEM's immediate networks. According to **Google Search Trends**, global interest in the term "Emergency Management" reached a **five-year high in August 2025**, reflecting the increased visibility and resonance of the campaign worldwide. This milestone underscores how NEMAM not only amplified awareness domestically but also sparked a global conversation about the importance of the profession.

Grassroots Participation

Survey responses collected in the **NEMAM After-Action Report (AAR)** confirmed the campaign's broad impact:

■ Nearly **80% of respondents** reported engaging in specific activities.

■ Top activities included **social media campaigns (70%), local government proclamations (43%), community outreach events (30%),**

and meetings with elected officials (30%).

■ Communication channels identified as most effective included **social media (72%)**, particularly LinkedIn and Facebook reels, and local tours and outreach meetings.

Participants emphasized messages such as "emergency management is public safety," "the role of the emergency manager," and "the focus and value of the local emergency management program." Many highlighted the campaign's role in increasing visibility: one respondent noted, "More people were talking about emergency management—who we are and what we do."

Building Momentum

The After-Action survey also offered valuable insights for future campaigns. Members praised the **toolkits, videos, and messaging templates** provided through IAEM, noting these resources significantly enhanced their outreach efforts. One participant remarked, "The push and support from IAEM was amazing—the videos that were produced were so helpful." Others called for expanding proclamations, creating additional pre-planned social media posts, and increasing opportunities for public preparedness challenges.

Encouragingly, **96% of respondents** stated they plan to participate again in 2026, with many volunteering to assist in planning and outreach. This demonstrates strong momentum to build upon this year's foundation.

Looking Ahead

The inaugural National Emergency Management Awareness Month successfully elevated the profession's profile, strengthened community outreach, and fostered meaningful conversations with the public and decision-makers alike. Thanks to the efforts of IAEM members and part-

ners, emergency management gained visibility at local, state, federal, and international levels.

As IAEM prepares for NEMAM 2026, we are committed to expanding resources, amplifying messages, and supporting members in their efforts to educate communities about the essential work of emergency managers. Together, we will continue to grow this campaign into a lasting tradition that advances our profession and strengthens preparedness worldwide. ♦

***Want to Help IAEM
Plan the 2026
National Emergency
Management
Awareness Month?***



***Scan the code and
complete short survey
to express your
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Get to Know Your IAEM Leadership

IAEM-USA Region 10 President

**Kevin Wickersham, CEM,
IAEM-USA Region 10 President**

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

Kevin has been an IAEM member for eight years. You can connect with Kevin on [LinkedIn](#) or email him at USARegion-10President@iaem.com.

■ **Biographical sketch:** Kevin Wickersham, MS, CEM, serves as the response section manager at the Washington State Emergency Management Division. Over the past 15 years he has served in EMS and as an emergency manager in health-care, higher education, public health, and state government. Kevin is a qualified Type 3 All-Hazards Incident Commander and serves as a planning section chief for the Incident Management Team for the United States Department of Health and Human Services National Disaster Medical System. He is a graduate of the FEMA National Emergency Management Advanced and Executive Academies and holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Sociology from Boston College and a Master's in Healthcare Emergency Management from the Boston University School of Medicine. Kevin resides in Lacey, Washington with his wife and two beautiful daughters.

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

In my previous position I worked in preparedness and response at the Washington State Department of Health and in January 2020 when the first case of COVID-19 in the United States was diagnosed in

Washington state, I was assigned as the incident commander for the department's IMT. Leading the state's initial response to what would evolve into global pandemic especially at a time of such extreme uncertainty was both the biggest challenge and greatest honor of my career so far. At that time, we did not know how COVID-19 spread, how deadly it was, or what populations it affected or how, which made response strategy an enormous challenge and required making extremely difficult decisions with very little reliable information. Backed by a supportive governor and secretary of health, and equipped with an extremely capable IMT and epidemiology and laboratory teams, we were empowered to do what was necessary to respond and had a high degree of success at conducting a whole of state government response. It's hard to describe how much I learned, like many others, being thrust into such a challenging and novel situation. Maybe most importantly though, my biggest takeaway is that the way we approached preparedness made us successful in response, and if I can be a successful leader in a situation like that, I can handle anything that comes my way.

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

I'm new to my role, and so far I've found it fascinating to learn more about the inner workings of IAEM and peek behind the scenes of this huge organization. I've never been



*Kevin Wickersham, CEM,
IAEM-USA Region 10 President*

on a board of directors either, so I'm already learning and expect to learn a ton more about how boards of directors work and see what strategies are effective at moving us forward together!

■ **How did you get your start in emergency management?**

As a kid growing up, I was always fascinated by disaster, interested in helping people, and enjoyed the thrill of a crisis. I also had an interest in medicine, so in high school as soon as I turned 18, I started going to night school also to earn my EMT certification. I arrived to Boston College a certified EMT and immediately got involved with the student-run EMS group which at that time mostly provided standby at large special events. As I attended event planning meetings and such, I kept running into this guy who said he was the director of

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IAEM-USA Region 10 President

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emergency management, which at that time I had no idea was an actual profession. I learned more and more through my EMS work and following my sophomore year, an opportunity arose to take a work study job in the Office of Emergency Management. There, John Tommaney became my first mentor and it was our conversations as well as the wide range of interesting and challenging projects I worked on under his leadership and learning from his expertise for two years. I also got to respond to my first disasters in that capacity, and discovered an absolute love of emergency management deciding before I graduated that I would make this field my life's work. I then went to grad school and learned my Master's in Emergency Management at Boston University, and in an ICS 300 class as a new grad student I met my next mentor Justin McCullen, who was at that time the emergency manager for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Justin brought me on as an intern, then later as a part time employee, and in the hospital setting and under Justin's guidance, my career was off to a strong start!

Mentorship from leaders in the field was the #1 difference maker that got me into and started with a strong foundation, so I make mentoring a priority in my work and I encourage all other EMs to as well. There's no better investment you can make than in the next generation.

To new and "up-and-coming" emergency managers, I encourage you to network! In every class you take or EM engagement you attend, could be your next mentor or employer, so go out on a limb and make some connections. I certainly would not be where I am in my career without doing so.

■ What motto do you live by?

Admiral John Paul Jones, considered the founding figure of the United States Navy, once said, "It seems to be a law of nature, inflexible and inexorable, that those who do not risk cannot win." This quote, to me, is such an important thing to keep in mind for emergency managers especially as we "lead upwards" to elected/appointed officials. When in emergencies there can be a bias for inaction, hand-wringing over cost or optics, fear to take a risk, etc., it's critical for us to remember that especially in response to emergencies and disasters, there is no such thing as "risk-free" and everything we do is a calculated risk. I have had a great deal of operational success over the years by being unafraid to try something new, and I've often found it to be the case that the best solutions to the most challenging issues are usually riskier than the "default." ♦

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The *IAEM Bulletin* is published monthly by IAEM to keep members abreast of association news, government actions affecting emergency management, research, and information sources.

The publication also is intended to serve as a way for emergency managers to exchange information on programs and ideas. Past issues are available in the members-only [IAEM Bulletin Archives](#).

Publishing an article in the *IAEM Bulletin* may help you to meet IAEM's certification requirements. Check out the [author's guidelines](#).

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

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IAEM in Action



IAEM-USA officers and senior staff met at HQ on August 20 to interview finalists to replace long-time Executive Director Beth Armstrong, CAE (center). Shown here with President Carrie Speranza, CEM; Secretary Erik Gaull, CEM; Assistant Director Chelsea Steadman; First Vice President, Josh Morton, CEM; and EMEX Director Clay Tyeryar, CAE.



IAEM-USA Executive Director Beth Armstrong (center) with Past President Bruce Lockwood, CEM; current President Carrie Speranza, CEM; and Past Presidents Nick Crossley, CEM; and Judd Freed, CEM. The group gathered at the NHA Host Social at the National Museum of American History on August 27 in Washington, D.C.



Drew Chandler, AEM, Kentucky Emergency Management Association Treasurer; Brian Clark, AEM, IAEM-USA Region 4 Kentucky State Representative; Jonathan Allen, AEM, Kentucky Emergency Management Association President; Drew Pearson, CEM, IAEM Region 4 President; and Duane Hagelgans, IAEM-USA Conference Committee Chair gather for a photo during the Kentucky Emergency Service Conference that was held in Louisville, Kentucky.



The Kentucky Emergency Service Conference was held in Louisville Sept. 2-5, 2025. IAEM-USA Region 4 had a booth at the event and engaged many of the more than 350 attendees and shared information on the benefits of IAEM membership, certification, and the IAEM Annual Conference in November.

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IAEM in Action
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Attendees at the 2025 IAEM-USA Region 9 Regional Symposium participated in many networking, learning, and educational sessions in Honolulu, Hawaii from Aug. 12-13.



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IAEM News to Know

IAEM-USA Elections

Please join us in congratulating our incoming leadership! See more information on the [IAEM site](#).

- Incoming 2nd VP: **Mary Jo Flynn-Nevins, CEM.**
- Returning Treasurer: **Walter English, III, MS, CEM, VaPEM.**
- Incoming Region 1 President: **Chelsea St. George, MS, MPH.**
- Returning Region 3 President: **Sara Ruch, CEM, CFM, MS.**
- Incoming Region 5 President: **Mick Fleming, CEM.**
- Incoming Region 7 President: **Claire Canaan, CEM.**
- Returning Region 9 President: **Jon Shear, CEM.**

Conference

■ **EMvision Talk Speakers Announced for the IAEM Annual Conference:** IAEM is pleased to announce the line-up of speakers for the ever-popular EMvision Talks® plenary session on Tuesday, Nov. 18. You will not want to miss this dynamic session that conference attendees rave about every year. Learn more about our speakers and the topic of their Talks on the [conference website](#).

■ **Early Bird Discount Expires Soon:** Save up to \$124 off your registration by locking in discounted rates before the deadline of October 10. If your funding is not approved yet, you can still [register now and pay later](#).

■ **Eight Bonus Sessions Are Available Live and On-Demand:** Register for the IAEM Annual Conference by the early bird deadline of Oct. 10, 2025, and receive access to the exclusive Early Edition Speaker Series of eight bonus sessions during the month of October and November on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12pm ET. Find out more about these sessions on our [conference website](#).

■ **Pre-/Post-Conference Training and Optional Outings are filling up fast:** Don't wait to register. Lock in your spot now in our highly sought after [training courses](#) and optional outings. IAEM offers a wide range of courses from one hour to three days, plus optional outings offered on every evening from Friday, Nov. 14 through Mon. Nov. 17. Gain the credits you need and expand your network with other conference attendees and [register today](#).

■ **Conference Challenge Coins Available:** Stop by the registration desk to purchase the limited-edition coins before they sell out. Cost is only \$15.

Certification

■ IAEM has launched the new certification portal and a small group of applicants have been selected to test the new application process. When the portal is ready for use, information will be circulated on how to login, navigate, and create applications in the new portal.

■ Important Information regarding the transition:

- If you have an open AEM, CEM, Lifetime, or Upgrade application in the current portal, you have until Oct. 31, 2025, to submit your application in the current portal.

- If you have an open recertification application in the current portal, you have until Dec. 31, 2025, to submit your application in the current portal.

- If you can't submit in the current portal by these dates, information from your application will need to be manually transferred to the new portal.

■ Please contact albon@iaem.com with any questions. ♦



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

Special Focus Articles:

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Submit an Article for the IAEM Bulletin

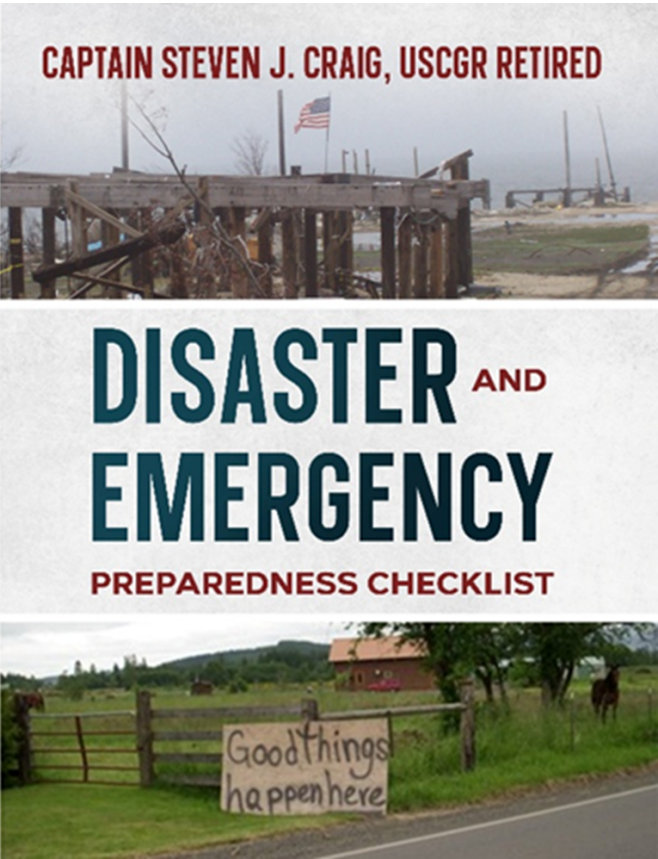
The IAEM Editorial Committee is currently accepting submissions for future editions of the IAEM Bulletin. Refer to the [Author Guidelines](#) for tips and techniques for successfully submitting your article for publication.

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

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



IAEM is pleased to announce a newly-formed partnership with the Incident Management Teams Association. [Find out more about IMTA's work.](#)



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Community Voices in Crisis Preparedness: Co-Developing Resilience Aspirations

By Shemilore Daniels, Senior Research Program Coordinator, Global Resilience Institute;
Emma Hibbert, Senior Research Associate, Global Resilience Institute

Across the Caribbean, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face an escalating crisis of hazard impacts, from devastating hurricanes to economic disruption, with each disaster compounding existing community vulnerabilities. Yet an important gap can undermine effective emergency response and resilience building: while these communities possess lived experiences, histories, and traditional knowledge about their environments, this information does not always align with the quantitative metrics that drive conventional disaster risk reduction interventions. The disconnect between community-held knowledge and formal funding and governance structures means these initiatives often fail to match communities' actual needs.

In 2023, the Global Resilience Institute at Northeastern University, in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (UWI) and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, was awarded a two-year project, Advancing Community Climate Resilience Planning (ACCRP), by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project's aim was to improve the Eastern and Southern Caribbean (ESC) region's community resilience, allowing them to manage and adapt to climate risks, while also developing blue and green economies. The team collaborated with two communities in Barbados and one in Dominica to identify community-supported adaptation efforts that can help mitigate the environmental, social, and economic risks associated with climate change.

The project approach involved two primary activities: (1) enrolling members of the Caribbean Islands Higher Education Resilience Consortium (CIHERC) in two university courses on leveraging participatory approaches to encourage local capacity building efforts and (2) co-developing a resilience baseline for our three target communities by adapting the Integrated Resilience Enhancement System (I-RES) to capture community-held knowledge. The primary objective of this project was to underscore the importance of co-developing sustainable strategies and placing community voices at the forefront of efforts to build resilience.

When reflecting on the most crucial factors for the project's success, three pathways for unveiling and activating community-held knowledge became apparent. These strategies that primarily focused on modes of capacity-building, communicating, and knowledge-sharing are shared below.

The Role of Higher Education as Community Partners—The University of the West Indies Model

One of the main goals of this activity was to advance capacity-building efforts across the Eastern and Southern Caribbean to undertake community resilience and climate adaptation work. This was achieved by integrating and positioning Caribbean Islands Higher Education Resilience Consortium (CIHERC) members to support similar efforts in their island communities.

CIHERC members participated in two comprehensive Northeastern University-based courses over Fall 2023 and Spring 2024:

Fall 2023: Facilitating Community and Organizational Change. This course focused on the process of community and organizational change, emphasizing how skillful facilitation can help communities design and implement solutions that address their specific circumstances.



Example community that could potentially receive aid through this approach.

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Co-Developing Resilience Aspirations

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Spring 2024: Participatory Modeling - Agent-Based Modeling for Applied and Social Sciences. This advanced course equipped participants with tools for collaborative modeling approaches that can support community-driven resilience planning and implementation.

The integration of these educational components with practical community engagement created pathways for CIHERC member institutions to serve as anchor organizations in their respective communities. Anchor institutions provide a formal space to collect valuable local knowledge and sustain community relationships. The positioning of CIHERC members as anchor institutions also enables them to bridge the gap between community-identified resilience priorities and available resources, technical expertise, and funding opportunities.

For detailed insights into the Resilience Aspirations developed through this work, see the [interactive story map](#).

Digital Innovation Meets Cultural Storytelling—Capturing Community Wisdom Through Technology

Experience-driven, qualitative information held by small, culturally distinctive, remote communities is often not reflected in standard assessment tools, reports, and consequently decisions made around resilience. Often, these assessments are at the national or regional level or do not engage with local communities in a meaningful way, thus failing to adequately capture their unique priorities, strengths, and concerns.

GRI's work and collaboration with “participatory modeling” and

community engagement scholars Dr. Moira Zellner and Dr. Dan Milz helped reveal another way to capture resilience metrics in Caribbean SIDS – that of using community-generated and described visuals and stories in an ARC-GIS StoryMap. Using this digital storytelling platform enhanced the co-development process, deeply embedding community stakeholders in the creation of these ARC-GIS Story Maps.

For example, volunteers from the District Emergency Organization in Barbados captured photos in their local communities of specific vulnerabilities, including roads without street lighting or with damaged surfaces, as well as a lack of protective storage for fishing equipment. They also shared what they valued in their community, including weekly fish pot gatherings and events held by the local fish folk organization, which help strengthen community cohesion.

Collectively, these ARC-GIS Story Maps illuminate community voices in a tangible format that can be used by communities themselves to build consensus on climate aspirations. Regular online communication and in-person feedback from community members throughout the process also solidified a sense of ownership over the ARC-GIS Story Maps narratives. The overarching intention of these ARC-GIS Story Maps is to connect community aspirations with reality by telling a story of resilience to potential funders of climate adaptation projects.

The final ARC-GIS Story Maps, which can be [viewed here](#), featured the communities' indicators of resilience; their strengths and weaknesses, and vulnerabilities, and their opportunities for change, improvement, and durable solutions. They serve as a novel approach to meaningfully capturing the rich knowledge and experiences of individual communities that can be leveraged to activate tailored

climate solutions.

The Community Climate Resilience Alliance—A Model for Multi-Stakeholder Knowledge Sharing

One of the project's most significant outcomes was the creation of the Community Climate Resilience Alliance (CCRA), a formal coordination mechanism that demonstrates how multi-stakeholder alliances can strengthen emergency management effectiveness. The CCRA creates important connections between government agencies, community organizations, academic institutions, and practitioners in the region who are working on similar resilience challenges, enabling resource sharing, joint planning, and coordinated responses. The alliance operates under agreed terms of reference that include supporting the Office of Disaster Management (ODM) and Division of Local Government in achieving targets outlined in Dominica's Climate Resilient and Recovery Plan 2020-2030, with quarterly meetings ensuring sustained coordination rather than one-off collaborations.

With the development of the CCRA, Coulibistrie, the target community in Dominica, has been able to share its needs directly with decision-makers who can create solutions, hear from other communities facing similar challenges, and access resources that were previously difficult to navigate. Consequently, a need for the Coulibistrie community—engineering experts who can assess an inoperable dam—is currently being addressed because of this model. More specifically, this direct communication pathway eliminates the traditional barriers where community voices get filtered through multiple layers before reaching those with funding

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Come for the Puffins, Stay for the History

By Lisa Blake, CBCP, Consultant; Virtual Pilot Participant, Peace Corps

The island of Heimaey in the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago (or Westman's Islands in English) is famous for its beautiful scenery and its puffins. And while neither of those should be missed, emergency managers may be interested in something else entirely – the island's famous volcanic history.

On Jan. 23, 1973, around 2:00 a.m., with little warning, there was a volcanic eruption on the island, which forced Heimaey's residents to quickly evacuate¹. Fortunately, there had been a storm the day before, so the boats that might have been out to sea were in the harbor and able to assist with evacuation efforts⁴. Over the course of six hours, the island's entire population was evacuated¹, with a few hundred first responders choosing to stay behind⁵. Miraculously, only one person died, but from gas poisoning after the eruption¹.

The evacuation is just the start of the story, however. As lava slowly advanced towards the town and the harbor, relying on the advice of Icelandic geologists and geophysicists, responders "fought" the lava¹. They used seawater to slow down and thicken the lava, as well as creating a barrier to stop it from flowing into the town¹. Starting with a limited

operation in early February, the operation grew to eventually utilize a pump ship in the harbor, 43 pumps, and 19 miles of pipes laid out in a branch network¹. Between February 6 to July 10, 1973, approximately 8 million cubic yards of pumped seawater turned 5 million cubic yards of molten lava into rock¹.

While this effort might not have worked in other cases, in retrospect, it was successful on Heimaey for several reasons. Mainly, the eruption was close to the center of town and was undertaken to protect a high-value infrastructure asset, important to national interests¹. Additionally, the lava flow was slow-moving, seawater was readily available, and transporting pumps and pipes was possible due to the harbor and local roads¹. Also helpful were detailed topographic maps, which allowed officials to predict the rate of the lava flow and the best places to build barriers¹.

Unfortunately, even with these

innovative response efforts, damage on the island was widespread. When the eruption was declared over on July 3, 1973, 400 homes and businesses, or a third of all buildings on Heimaey, were destroyed⁵. Additionally, lava and ash from the explosion covered about 20 percent of the island⁵, expanding the island by 2.2 Km with the lava covering 3.3 km². Large-scale



Poles in Heimaey marking the height of ash accumulation in 1973.

cleanup efforts began, but would end up taking months⁵.

Present Day Heimaey

As expected, the history of the eruption is all present on Heimaey. Visitors can hike up the volcano of Eldfell and see the remnants of the eruption. They can also follow a marked route through the town, which leads to Eldheimar, an impressive museum built around an excavated home with interactive exhibits⁵. Or, they can just walk through the town. While walking, you see places where the lava stopped flowing, see memorial plaques and poles, which mark how high the ash reached⁶.

Given the island's history and its isolated location, today, Heimaey has a robust volcano response plan. Seismic activity on the island is constantly monitored, and the response plan can be activated at three civil protection levels, including:

1. Uncertainty level —when something is happening due to natural or human causes that could, at a



A lava flow which has stopped just short of destroying a Heimaey home.

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Come for the Puffins, Stay for the History

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later stage, threaten the health and safety of people or the environment.

2. Danger Level —it there is a threat to health and safety of people or environment, but not so serious as to constitute an emergency.

3. Emergency level —when accidents or disasters have occurred or when human health safety is threatened².

The plan also includes an evacuation plan, which divides the island into five zones, each with its own emergency response center². If only a portion of the island needs to be evacuated, the plan can be down-scaled². Before an event, notifications would go out through radio broadcasts and SMS². And if needed, evacuations would occur by boat or by plan. Emergency relief stations would be stood up at the boat docks and even possibly in Reykjavik, if transport needed to occur there.²

While, unfortunately, Heimaey won't ever be able to eliminate its risk, they are more prepared than ever. And like elsewhere in Iceland, residents have found a way to live-and thrive —with a volatile mother nature. ♦

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Co-Developing Resilience Aspirations

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or implementation authority. For emergency managers, this model also shows how formal coordination structures can prevent duplicated efforts, maximize limited resources, and ensure that resilience solutions reflect actual community needs.

The ACCRP project highlights three potential pathways to center community perspectives and knowledge at the heart of emergency preparedness and climate resilience. These include positioning universities as anchor institutions to lead local community resilience efforts, meaningfully capturing community perspectives through novel digital platforms, and building partnerships to align efforts and directly respond to community needs. Whether you are an emergency manager, researcher, or grant administrator, the approaches used in this project can be adapted and applied to help reveal community-held knowledge and embed these voices in resilience actions. ♦



GET TO KNOW THE:

Mental Health and Wellness Caucus



Our purpose is to bring mental health and wellness to the forefront of the emergency management and response community, provide a platform where issues are openly addressed, become a critical part of the overall emergency management culture, and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues that impact individuals, professionals, and organizations.

Who is the caucus for?

The Mental Health and Wellness Caucus is ideal for emergency managers and responders seeking wellness support, leaders promoting mental health within their teams, those working to reduce stigma around mental health in the field, and anyone passionate about resilience and overall well-being in emergency management.

Interested in joining?

We meet every third Wednesday of the month at 2:30 pm CT/3:30 pm ET via Teams and always welcome new members! Join us to help build a healthier, more supportive EM community.

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Local Capacity is a National Security Issue: Funding Readiness Over Response

By Misha R. McNabb MA-EMEL, VT-EMD, NRP,
Executive Director, Crisis Management Partners, LLC

For decades, United States emergency management has operated under the comforting belief that when a disaster strikes, response systems will automatically engage—regardless of scale, jurisdiction, or capacity. Yet in practice, this assumption collapses at the local level, where the response is only as good as the capacity in place before the crisis began.

The hard truth? Most United States jurisdictions are not prepared. Not because they lack the will, but because they lack the staffing, funding, and structural support to build foundational readiness. And in a world increasingly defined by complex, cascading threats—from climate-driven catastrophes to cyberattacks—the cost of neglecting local capacity is just insufficient, and it's a national security liability.

What Does “Capacity” Really Mean in Emergency Management?

Capacity is often reduced to budget figures or staff counts. But in emergency management, actual capacity is far more complex and critical. It includes the ability to develop, update, and operationalize emergency operations plans and hazard mitigation strategies, not as static documents, but as functional playbooks grounded in local risk. It means having trained personnel who know the Incident Command System (ICS) and can apply it under pressure, collaborate with partners, and make decisions when seconds count.

Actual capacity also requires administrative infrastructure: someone who knows how to navigate federal

grant systems, submit quarterly reports, and stay compliant with ever-evolving requirements. And increasingly, it demands technical tools and the expertise to use them, such as GIS mapping for situational awareness, redundant communication systems, and the ability to send timely alerts to the public.

For many jurisdictions, especially those in rural or underfunded areas, these components are often lacking. That's not a reflection of local negligence—it's the result of structural inequity in how preparedness is funded and staffed. Without these fundamentals, even the most robust federal response will arrive too late, too disconnected, or too dependent on systems that don't exist locally.

The Data Tells the Story

According to FEMA's 2023 National Preparedness Report, nationwide readiness indicators have stalled or declined in core capability areas, such as operational coordination, planning, and community resilience, particularly among rural and underserved jurisdictions (FEMA, 2023).

A 2022 GAO report echoed this, noting that FEMA's funding systems and technical assistance are not equitably reaching jurisdictions with the most significant vulnerability (GAO, 2022). Local emergency managers repeatedly cite administrative burden, lack of grant writing capacity, and staffing shortages as barriers to implementation, even when funding is theoretically “available.”

Federal Policy Still Prioritizes Response Over Readiness

Despite strategic rhetoric surrounding mitigation and resilience, the bulk of disaster funding remains reactive. The Disaster Relief Fund (DRF)—FEMA's primary mechanism for disaster support—pours billions into recovery after disasters occur, while readiness programs remain underfunded or politically unstable (FEMA, 2025b; Painter, 2024).

In 2025, FEMA sunset one of its most extensive state-focused resilience grant programs, citing duplication and inefficiency (FEMA, 2025c). While efforts to streamline are understandable, they often leave local jurisdictions without clear pathways to build capacity in advance of the next event.

Capacity Deficits as a National Security Threat

This isn't just an issue of local inconvenience—it's a full-scale national vulnerability. When small jurisdictions are unable to develop or update hazard mitigation plans, recovery efforts stall, and federal dollars flow more slowly, often wastefully. When tribal, rural, and border communities lack communications infrastructure, interoperability breaks down, crippling mutual aid and delaying critical response coordination. When local health departments can't sustain emergency operations or support vulnerable populations, the fallout overwhelms neighboring systems, cascading across healthcare, transportation, and public safety networks.

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Disasters don't stop at jurisdictional lines. They exploit vulnerable systems.

Wildfires in the Pacific Northwest, floods in Appalachia, hurricanes in the Gulf—each reveals how local breakdowns trigger national consequences. And in a world where disease, supply chain disruptions, cyber threats, and environmental displacement cross borders in real time, these local deficits have global ripple effects.

If our strategy continues to treat local preparedness as optional or secondary, we are not just unprepared—we are all exposed. National security doesn't start at the Pentagon. It begins in a rural EOC with one overworked and undersupported volunteer with no backup plan.

The International Lens: We're Not Alone

This challenge is not unique to the United States. Globally, nations have begun rethinking the scale and scope of localized disaster preparedness as part of broader national resilience strategies.

For example:

- **Sweden's Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)** emphasizes "shared societal responsibility," supporting municipalities with clear mandates and resources to prepare for hybrid threats (För samhällsskydd och beredskap, 2022).

- **Finland's Security Strategy for Society** integrates readiness from the municipal to the national level with cross-sectoral exercises and readiness indicators tracked across ministries (Finland PMO, 2017).

- **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** funds localized capacity-building as a cornerstone of international resilience projects, recognizing that without local own-

ership, national frameworks fail in practice (JICA, 2024).

The lesson is clear: Resilience is built from the ground up—but only when it is funded and structured from the top down.

The U.S. Needs a "Readiness Equity" Framework

To modernize our approach, the United States should adopt a "readiness equity" framework—a policy and funding model that prioritizes capacity-building at the local level, especially in high-risk or underserved areas.

Key pillars of such a framework include:

- **Regional Technical Assistance Hubs:** Establish Federal-funded planning and exercise coordinators at the regional level to assist local jurisdictions with grant applications, HMP updates, and continuity planning.

- **Simplified Grant Access:** Redesign preparedness grants (e.g., HSGP or infrastructure) to include tiered requirements based on jurisdiction size and capacity, with pre-populated application templates and waived match thresholds for the smallest communities.

- **Readiness Metrics that Matter:** Move away from counting deliverables (e.g., number of plans written) toward measuring functional capability, such as the ability to staff an EOC, conduct an annual exercise, or update risk assessments with climate-informed data.

- **Flexible Workforce Funding:** Enable the use of federal dollars for hiring permanent or cross-jurisdictional staff with resilience responsibilities, not just short-term contractors. Public health has successfully utilized this model in vaccine preparedness and community health initiatives.

- **Interoperability Incentives:** Support shared services models, such as Vermont's Local Health EOCs

and Regional Planning Commissions, that coordinate multi-town planning, training, and emergency operations.

Lessons from Vermont: What Shared Capacity Looks Like

Vermont provides a compelling use case for capacity-building at scale in a rural state. Through Vermont Emergency Management and in partnership with the Vermont Department of Health, Vermont has implemented a decentralized Incident Support Model (ISM) where Emergency Preparedness & Planning staff assist multiple municipalities in developing Local Emergency Management Plans, continuity plans, and public information strategies. Small towns like Canaan and Springfield have operationalized local mitigation plans not through increased local hiring, but through shared infrastructure and technical support.

These structures now serve as templates for other New England states and have been cited as practical implementations in FEMA's CPG 101 Version 3.1 and Hazard Mitigation Planning (HMP) tools (FEMA, 2025a; Town of Canaan, 2024; Town of Springfield, 2024).

This Is Not a Resource Problem—It's a Prioritization Problem

The United States has spent over \$278 billion in federal disaster assistance in the last decade (Painter, 2024). But only a fraction of that goes toward building the capacity needed to prevent or contain the next disaster. Billions are spent on recovery while preparedness—especially at the local level—remains structurally underfunded.

This isn't a shortage of dollars. It's a misalignment of priorities. We don't need more funding. We need

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more innovative, more strategic financing. Instead of rebuilding communities repeatedly, we must invest in their capacity to prevent, prepare for, and withstand shocks. And that starts by recognizing that local readiness is a national imperative.

One way to shift this dynamic is by reallocating a portion of federal control over disaster funds, providing jurisdictions with direct, flexible funding tied to functional readiness metrics, rather than just compliance. Local leaders are more familiar with their risks, vulnerabilities, and capabilities than distant federal program officers. With autonomy and trust, communities can innovate, plan, and respond more quickly and effectively.

Restoring resilience to the locals is philosophically aligned with whole community principles, and it's a practical necessity if we want preparedness efforts to be effective, sustainable, and successful.

Conclusion: Readiness Is Not a Luxury

Suppose the United States wants to lead in international emergency management and serve as a model of decentralized resilience. In that case, we must start by addressing the readiness inequity in our own backyard.

This requires reframing local emergency management capacity as an issue of national security, governance stability, and international credibility. We cannot preach resilience abroad while underfunding it at home. We can't talk about "whole community" and then leave half the country without the resources to act.

The next crisis may begin with a storm, a cyberattack, or a global pandemic, but its resolution will hinge on whether we have the foresight to


fund readiness over response.

So here's the challenge: Stop asking why local governments aren't doing more, and start asking why we keep designing systems that assume they can. It's time to flip the script, fund smarter, and build capacity like lives and legitimacy depend on it.

Because local governments do more with less. ♦

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The IAEM-USA Emerging Professionals Caucus (EPC) is a community dedicated to connecting and providing resources to students, young professionals, and individuals entering the field of emergency management to help them grow and succeed in the field.

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- Early-career professionals building experience in EM.
- Career-changers entering the field.
- Experienced professionals looking to mentor and support emerging talent.

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Challenges from a World Event

**By Jeffrey Gallagher, Disaster Response Program Manager,
Disaster Management and Business Continuity, Parkland Health**

As many of you are aware, a world event is about to occur in the Spring of 2026—The 2026 FIFA World Cup. Have you thought about all the areas that could be impacted by an event this size? By no means is this an all-encompassing list of questions, but I hope this helps with brainstorming for how you will be impacted. I anticipate everyone will be impacted at various levels.

Have you thought about just how many people will be in your city? Cities with venues would have more than the cities that don't, but even the cities without a venue would be impacted. Where are these individuals going to stay? They'll stay wherever they can stay, probably greater distances than we expect, as long as they get to watch their favorite team play. I make that assumption because if you're willing to fly internationally, then I doubt you would be detoured just because of sleeping arrangements. They're going to stay wherever they must.

On that point, once they find a place to stay, think about traffic. Getting to where we want to go can be challenging at certain times of the day, but factor that into game day, how congested will things get? What if there was a wreck on the highway? What if a car runs out of gas on a service road? All it takes is one incident on a roadway to delay our time to our final destination. It may be time to look at other routes of travel for emergency response. Firefighters only have a few moments to decide on what the fastest route is, and even then, it could change once enroute.

On the topic of firefighters, let's talk about the paramedics; they might have some unique challenges

heading their way. How will they handle the language barriers they may encounter in a medical emergency? What if a religion disapproves of a lifesaving intervention like a blood transfusion? Do we have enough ambulances to handle such a surplus of people in your areas?

Think about the possible diseases and illnesses that are unique to a country, what if they come to our hospitals? Are the healthcare settings ready? It's not just knowledge and recognizing the signs and symptoms, but also personal protective equipment. Do you have enough? Have you trained enough? What if the individual tests positive for a possible high-consequence infectious disease? Do you have a plan to handle this patient from start to end?

Do "restaurants" have enough food? Alright, you got me, I'm referring to the bars. The venue itself, let's say it's a rivalry game, has had some unfortunate events happen at the end. Let me paint another picture for you. Fans of team A and fans of team B aren't at the stadium. Team A is at the bar on the west side of the street, and Team B is at the bar on the east side of the street. Yep, everyone's been drinking. Does anyone know what might happen in the streets if they were to meet? Are the law enforcement officials prepared and ready? Do we have the staffing to handle a possible intensive scenario of this type? If we end up having to place them under arrest, do we have room? What if we run out? Where do we hold them?

Are my fire prevention people ready? The Fire Marshal may be getting pretty close to business owners in the future. Buildings have a predetermined occupancy limit, and if they were to exceed that limit, how do

we handle that? Kick them out? Shut the place down? What if they don't listen to us? Referring to a challenge I mentioned in the beginning, they do want to listen to you, but don't understand you because of the different languages

I'm not an information technology guru, and I'm totally ok with that, but discussions need to happen in this area. With so many people in such a tight space, how does that affect our cell phones? Does this affect our radio systems? Even if something were to be affected, how do we keep going to minimize that downtime?

Sanitation services should have a plan. More people probably means more trash. How do we keep up with that surplus? More people? Over time? Your budget may be tight.

Let's assume you had the answers to all the big questions, but something else to think about—weather. This event is happening in Spring. How will the weather affect all this? Heat? Tornados?

I could sit here and type out all kinds of questions and scenarios, but hopefully, I got you to start thinking about the impact of this event. You don't place the word "world" in an event and expect it to be small. This is the time to start looking at your current plans, thinking about your future plans, and collaborating. You may not have the immediate answer to a certain question, but if you work together, you'll find it together. Be safe out there. ♦

A Regional Response Mechanism Designed for the Caribbean Context

By Elizabeth Riley, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency; Dr. Evangeline Inniss-Springer, CEM®, DHSc, CCM, Director, The University of the West Indies Disaster Risk Reduction Centre; and Kate Dischino, CEM, Director of Partnerships, Global Support and Development

The Caribbean is the second most hazard-prone region in the world and exists on the front lines of the climate crisis. This is not a distant threat but a present reality. The region faces multiple natural hazards, including hurricanes, floods, landslides, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. Combined with the big ocean geography of multiple and multi-island small states, this creates a natural hazard risk landscape that necessitates horizontal cooperation, cross-border coordination, and a unique emphasis on the maritime environment. Growing complexities in emergency logistics and supply chain disruptions pose further challenges across the geographic space. Additional considerations of the unique Caribbean landscape include varying levels of capacity, poverty, inequity, and reliance on tourism, agriculture, natural resources, and, most recently, the shifting geopolitical landscape, which reduces traditional international aid, creating a pathway for Caribbean resilience.

The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency

The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency is the regional intergovernmental agency for disaster management in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Originally established as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) in 1991, the agency was reenvisioned in 2009, with the agreement to rename the institution

the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). All CARICOM and Non-CARICOM Member States of the Caribbean region are eligible for CDEMA membership. CDEMA embraces the principles and practice of Comprehensive Disaster Management, whereby together with its twenty Participating States and diverse partners seeks to reduce the risks and loss associated with all hazards, including the effects of climate change, and enhance regional sustainable development.

CDEMA Participating States (PS) include Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Cayman Islands, Commonwealth of The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Republic of Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Sint Maarten, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Virgin Islands.

The Regional Response Mechanism

The complexities of Comprehensive Disaster Management in the Caribbean require a multitude of partners to work cohesively within the existing system to maximize resources and impact. In keeping with its mandate, CDEMA established the Regional Response Mechanism (RRM) to provide timely, coordinated response support to hazard-affected Participating States. The RRM is a globally unique model that draws on and pools resources from CDEMA Participating States, regional insti-

tutions, international humanitarian organizations, regional and international disciplined forces, the private sector, and civil society to complement national emergency response efforts.

The RRM serves as a cornerstone of regional cooperation, promoting a unified approach to building resilience to natural and man-made hazards. It is structured around four interlinked components:

■ Governance Structure:

Defines the legal and operational framework for RRM partners, facilitating inter-agency collaboration and coordination.

■ Sub-Regional Structure:

Decentralizes regional operations into four sub-regions, led by a sub-regional focal point, formalizes mutual aid, and is organized by the Eastern Sub-Region (Antigua and Barbuda), Central (Barbados), Southern (Trinidad and Tobago), and North-Western (Jamaica).

■ Regional Response Units:

Specialized teams representing emergency support functions deploy to provide critical surge support to impacted Participating States during emergency events, upon request.

■ Coordination Structure:

The Caribbean Development Partners Group (CDPG) brings together national, regional, and international disaster management partners for coordinated action. The CDPG is co-chaired by the CDEMA Executive Director and the United Nations Resident Coordinator for the impact-

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ed State(s) with strategic decisions operationalized through the Regional Coordination Centre (CDEMA's Emergency Operations Centre).

These components function in synchronized coordination, maximizing the use of available resources and ensuring a timely, effective, and efficient response aligned with international humanitarian principles and CDEMA's mandate, on behalf of and invitation of the Participating States.

State Sovereignty and Regional Solidarity

The CDEMA system honours four principles in the delivery of regional disaster response support. Respect for sovereignty recognizes that each state has the responsibility to prepare for and to respond to the impacts of a hazard event, including initiating, organizing, coordinating, and implementing external assistance. The sovereignty of the State must be respected by all external partners. As such, external assistance is on request and in support of the national system.

Regional solidarity and the commitment to support impacted states as requested are foundational to the system, which operates on agreed standards and models that support interoperability. The system also observes compliance with the International Humanitarian Principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Finally, adherence to the principles of partnership, including transparency, responsibility, complementarity, and a results-oriented approach, is applied.

A Tiered Response Structure

An agreed three-tiered response structure within the CDEMA System ensures a common understanding of triggers and associated actions by Participating States and collaborating partners.

A **Level 1 response** is a local event in which no external assistance is required. The affected Participating State has adequate resources to manage the event, and the RRM is not activated. The CDEMA Coordinating Unit (the operational arm of CDEMA) monitors and shares information with partners and other CDEMA Participating States.

A **Level 2 response** is one in which the national capacity to respond is not overwhelmed, but some external assistance is required. The affected State may or may not declare a disaster or disaster areas. In this scenario, the CDEMA Coordinating Unit may provide technical assistance, specialised equipment, support personnel, and/or information sharing.

A **Level 3 response** is one in which the capacity of the affected State to respond is overwhelmed. In such cases, the RRM is activated and regional operations are mounted to support the national response. Other support from international agencies may be required.

Rightsizing for the Future

The dynamic and complex multi-hazard landscape of the Caribbean reinforces that now is the time to build the next level Regional Response Mechanism, an adaptive mechanism equipped to meet the needs of the current and future region's evolving risk environment. We are accounting for the realities of today, integrating lessons learned from the past, and planning towards an evolving future. We see natural, technological, and biological hazards

compounded by climate change. We are experiencing more severe weather events with high-intensity rainfall, more frequent droughts, earlier and "out-of-season" storms, rapid intensification and increased intensity of storms, and rarely seen before occurrences of excess heat and tornadoes in the region. Complex interactions of climate with other hazards are resulting in more activations of the Regional Response Mechanism for longer periods and a greater demand for resources.

The next level Regional Response Mechanism must emphasize self-reliance and deliver new innovative approaches and ways of working to meet the shifting hazard and geopolitical context. Agility and flexibility to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to all hazards which face the region will be a requirement, leveraging technology, adapting governance structures, and securing adequate human, physical, and financial resources. It offers renewed opportunity to double down on regional sustainability and solidarity. We recognize that partnership lies at the heart of success. We encourage new ideas, early engagement, and sustainable approaches, reinforcement of locally led approaches, and commitment to work within the existing system.

To learn more about the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency visit cdema.org. ♦



EM Calendar

Sept. 26	Protecting Places of Worship Weeks of Action 2025: Surveillance Detection Principles Webinar
Oct. 21-23	2025 Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) Implementation Workshop and Training National Fire Corps Academy (ISA) Rome, Italy
Oct. 30	IAEM Annual Memorial Service, USA Business Meeting, and Global Report
Nov. 14-20	2025 IAEM Annual Conference Louisville, Kentucky

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