

Presentation Title: Sustainable Post-Storm Mitigation Efforts in Underserved Western Alaska Communities



Daryl Schaffer retired in 2021 as a U.S. Coast Guard Captain after nearly 31 years of service and served the last four years of military service after becoming disabled from a cerebellar stroke and traumatic brain injury. He has a master's degree in both Human Resource Management and Security and Disaster Management, is a graduate of the FEMA National Emergency Management Advanced Academy, and is a Ph.D. Candidate in the University of Alaska Fairbanks Natural Resources and Sustainability program concentrating on disaster management. With over 40 years of emergency management experience, he has been a certified Incident Command System Type-1 Logistics Section Chief, Type-3 Incident Commander, Type-3 Planning Section Chief, and was a Unified Commander during Hurricane Katrina response. He has blended this background in published articles and to speak at more than a dozen regional, national, and international conferences on the interaction between disasters and individuals with disabilities.

About the Presentation

Your community is ready for a disaster...but from what viewpoint were the disaster plans prepared? Will a person and their power wheelchair be rescued together? Are there drivers for the buses to evacuate those without vehicles? Or were the plans made for people with cars to escape on their own time? How do we get beyond this limited-view access of who belongs in, or is part of, our safety culture? A sustainable climate-resilient community depends on their location and what is considered to be resilient. In western Alaska, primarily sustainable Indigenous subsistence lifestyle communities have proven quite resilient to climate over the past 5000 years. But in September 2022, the impact from one storm traversing the entire 1300-mile geographically isolated Alaska west coast was more significant than previous generations. Post-typhoon Merbok became a disaster cascade which included prior climate-related land erosion, inadequate housing, damage to infrastructure, food insecurity, and sustainable livelihood, thus making numerous Indigenous communities, and individuals with disabilities therein, even more vulnerable. Most federal, state, and local disaster policies have not understood, nor taken into consideration, historical Indigenous knowledge of continual adaptation to climate. Disaster planning and response is typically addressed from an urban and rural perspective, but more challenges abound in remote and isolated locations across the country and globe.