

## **Frances Edwards, Ph.D., CEM**

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### COMPETITIVE DIVISION – ACADEMIC

#### Best Practices in Disaster Public Communications: Evacuation Alerting and Social Media

Renowned sociologist Dennis Mileti identified the challenges of creating evacuation alerts that would engender action by community members. He noted that people spend time “milling” between notification and action, such as checking with friends and family, observing the actions of neighbors and questioning whether the alert applies to them. This can be life-threatening. Now sorting through social media messaging is added to this activity. Researchers from San Jose State University have examined how community members responded to alerting during the SCU and CZU complex wildland fires in 2020, and which best practices seemed to engender timely action. The poster displays some of the best practices used for alerting and warning during the SCU and CZU fires by official alerting sources using IPAWS and WEA, by local agency public information officers, and with social media presence. It includes the value of pre-disaster public education in decision-making about evacuation, and the importance of cultural competency in developing and delivering evacuation messaging.

The San Jose State University researchers have also created a white paper that proposes the creation of an app that could speed the social media

investigation by sorting messages by GIS coordinates, time, and sources using Big Data to ensure that the messages reviewed are relevant, timely and generated in the same community where the event is occurring. This removes materials created outside of the impacted community and hours earlier, which would not be relevant for emergency decision-making. The notional design of a smart phone app that could speed milling, and in turn speed evacuation actions, that uses social media and Big Data, is displayed.

**Presentation Theme:** This project reflects research, experience, practice, and findings connected to emergency management of events requiring evacuation messaging for the community.

**Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research:** The project research team includes Professor Frannie Edwards, CEM, Principal Investigator; Professor Kaikai Liu, Associate Principal Investigator; Professor Dan Goodrich, CEM, White Paper Project Lead; Professor Jerry Gao, Professor Amanda Hughes, Alan Barner, and Battalion Chief Robert Herrera

**Funding:** The Knight Foundation

**Institutional Review Board Proof of regulatory committee approval:** This project qualified for an Exclusion from Institutional Review Board oversight because there are no human subjects. The Exclusion form is available on request.