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## News Release

### **IAEM-USA Announces the 2024 Preparedness Award**

**Oct. 22, 2024 (Falls Church, Va.)** – The Awards & Recognition Committee of the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA) has selected the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management Model EOC (Emergency Operation Camp) Summer 2024 for the IAEM-USA 2024 Preparedness Award. The award will be presented at the President’s Banquet and Awards Ceremony on Nov. 20 at the 72<sup>nd</sup> IAEM Annual Conference & EMEX in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

#### **Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management Model EOC (Emergency Operation Camp) Summer 2024 2024 IAEM-USA Preparedness Award Recipient**

The Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management Summer 2024: Model EOC (Emergency Operation Camp) program provided an opportunity for high school students to spend one week at the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) in June learning about the hazard risk, Sonoma County Emergency Operations Center functions and roles, and emergency preparedness.

The first four days of learning included learning how the different EOC roles (planning, operations, logistics, public information, finance, and management) function, how emergency preparedness can help decrease the effects of disasters, and what happens in a disaster at the EOC. Segments were taught by community professionals with experience as chiefs in the EOC and playing critical roles in emergency management or public service. Eleven different presenters participated in making this a fun and informative event.

The students learned about preparedness, better understood county emergency processes, and understood how many ways county staff and organizations look after their welfare in a disaster. Sonoma County has had several (major wildfires, floods, pandemic) incidents in the last seven years, so there has been upheaval for as long as these young people can remember.

The goals of this project were to help students understand critical decision-making in disasters, get them disaster-prepared, and inspire them to careers in emergency management. Further, it helps students understand big-picture ideas and how actions before a disaster can change your outcomes. Sometimes, there is no perfect solution, but decisions must be made. Additionally, the project helped students from across the county develop networks that can be drawn on throughout their lives as friendships and professional support. Finally, this was a part of overall community resilience building – having people of all ages integrate disaster preparedness into their lives as a standard practice, building a resilient community.

**The Preparedness Award** recognizes outstanding accomplishments in preparedness activities and services for constituencies served.

*IAEM-USA, the nation's largest emergency management professional association, is a non-profit organization representing more than 5,800 emergency management and homeland security professionals for local communities, state and federal disaster officials, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and others involved in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all types of disasters, including acts of terrorism. IAEM provides access to the largest network of emergency management experts who can provide advice and assistance, the Certified Emergency Manager program, annual scholarships, a comprehensive monthly newsletter, and more.*

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