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## Special Focus on the IAEM Annual Conference Theme: Emergency Management Ascending Part 2

### Leveraging Disability Leadership and a Technology-Based Response to Achieve Inclusion

By Dawn Skaggs, MA, Chief Program Officer, World Institute on Disability; and Christina Alfaro, Emergency, Disaster and Climate Resilience Program Manager, World Institute on Disability

The authors will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on Nov. 20 from 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Ascending is upward movement, something we can rarely accomplish alone or in a silo. It must occur as a result of an interaction with your environment and usually with others. When climbing a mountain, like working in a team, there is a familiar phrase, “a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.” But what if we are looking at that link from the wrong perspective, what if what looks like a weak and open link is actually a carabiner clip with the capacity to strengthen our work, and take our ascension on a different route?

As emergency managers, we rely on what we know to address what is unpredictable. As our world changes, so must our perspectives, strategies and even some of our partners. Emergency management has made great strides towards a whole community approach that acknowledges the needs and assets of the diverse populations in our communities, particularly those who

are marginalized and experience barriers during blue sky days. People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs have become a topic of our planning. Physical access, alternate forms of communication, and availability of durable medical equipment are topics being recognized and addressed.

Ascending the mountain of inclusive emergency management has been, and continues to be a series of choices and prioritizing. Spending limited budget funds on ASL interpreter vendor contracts, accessible transportation resources to match the mobility disability demographics, or mental and behavioral health services is essential, but that doesn’t mean the decision making is easy. These decisions are made ever more difficult when we may not be experts in the needs of the community. Historically, the disaster related needs of people with disabilities and

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## IAEM in Action



*IAEM Members Jodi Freet, CEM, AJ Seeley, and Kim Elder grab a photo at the IAEM table during the Iowa Homeland Security Conference in Ankeny, Iowa on Oct 9-11.*



*On Oct 3 in Butte, Montana, the Montana Emergency Management Association's officers for 2024-2025 gather for a photo: (Left to right) Eastern region rep: Brandon Roth; Western region rep: Tom Wagenknecht; President: Doug Dodge; Secretary: Rochelle Hoerning; Vice President: David Stamey; Treasurer: Annemarie Overcast; Not pictured: Central Region Rep: Kelsey Buckley.*



*In September 2024, IAEM-USA 1st Vice President Josh Morton, CEM, attended and presented at the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. He is pictured here with NALEO President Claudia M. Frometa.*



*At the Montana Emergency Management Association annual meeting in Butte, Montana, on Oct. 1, IAEM Government Affairs Director Thad Huguley spoke about IAEM's government affairs efforts.*

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# IAEM News to Know

## Certification News

■ IAEM is conducting a survey to gather feedback on the Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) education requirement, and we want to hear from you! The survey closes on Nov. 30, 2024—don't miss your chance to shape the future of the CEM program. [Take the survey here](#). All responses will be kept anonymous, so please share your honest feedback. Be sure to click the black "submit" button at the bottom of the "Thank You" page to submit your response. Help us spread the word to ensure we gather input from across the emergency management community.

## Bylaws Update

■ Thank you to all members who responded to the recent Bylaws amendment vote. The Bylaws amendments were approved and are now available on the [IAEM web-site](#).

## Conference News

■ Register now for the IAEM Annual Conference to see speakers, experience networking, and learn about essential services and products in emergency management. Learn more about the [IAEM Annual Conference](#).

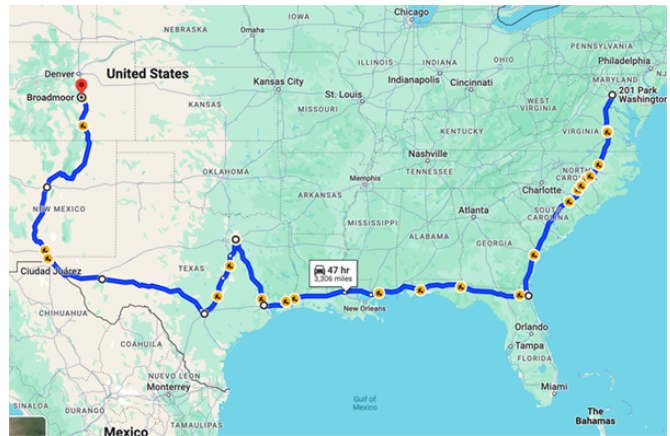
## IAEM2Go Mobile App

■ The IAEM2Go mobile app is the Annual Conference goes essential piece of technology—this free app gives you access to IAEM's program, allows you to download and see presenters presentations, provides maps to navigate the Broadmoor, 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](#). Scan the below QR code to download IAEM2Go today!

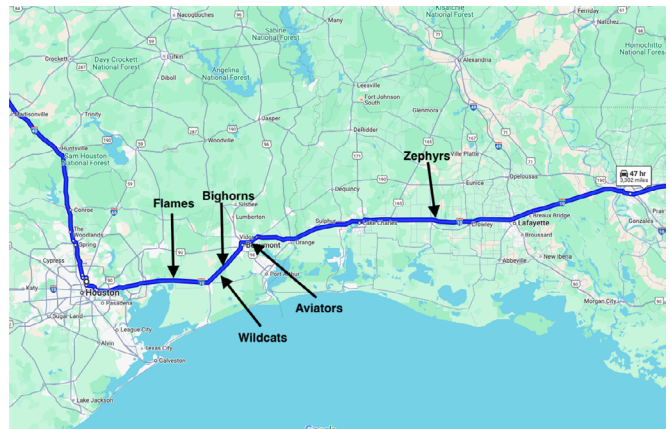


## Climb To Colorado Update:

### ■ The Climbers Route to Colorado:



### ■ Current Progress of the teams:



## IAEM Poster Showcase

■ Get a sneak peek of the IAEM Poster Showcase prior to your arrival in Colorado Springs. 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 19, from 10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in the Broadmoor Pre-Function Lobby.



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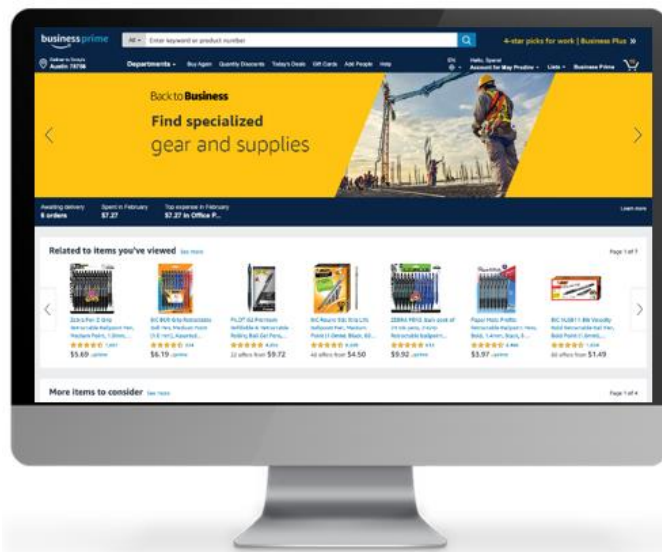
[CLICK HERE FOR INVITE LINK TO LOGIN](#)

IAEM Amazon Business Resources: (Click and Download to View)

1. [Amazon Business Frequently Asked Questions Document](#)
2. [User Registration Guide](#)
3. [Requisitioner \(Buyer\) Training Deck](#)
4. [Self-Service Resources/Guides](#)

### Check out the various Amazon Business Storefronts

[First Responders Storefront](#)  
[COVID-19 PPE and Workplace Safety](#)  
[Climate Pledge Friendly](#)



**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](#).

[Leveraging Disability Leadership and a Technology-Based Response to Achieve Inclusion](#)

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## Contribute to the IAEM Member Calendar

IAEM members stay connected through their participation in the [IAEMconnect Community](#). The community includes a robust calendar to keep members informed of events, IAEM meetings (committees, caucuses, commissions, Boards), webinars, exhibits, upcoming deadlines important to emergency managers, and more.

## Submit an Article for the IAEM Bulletin

The IAEM Editorial Committee is currently accepting submissions for future editions of the IAEM Bulletin.

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.

Refer to the [Author Guidelines](#) for tips and techniques for successfully submitting your article for publication.

## Thank you to the IAEM Editorial Committee

IAEM extends a warm thank you to the IAEM Editorial Committee for their assistance in compiling, editing, and publishing the monthly *IAEM Bulletin*.

**Interested in joining the IAEM Editorial Committee? Contact IAEM Bulletin Editor [John Osborne](#) and tell him how you can contribute to or learn from this committee's important work.**

## Leveraging Disability Leadership

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others with access and functional needs were viewed as an additional burden that required additional resources or a separate annex. Some plans still read that these needs “should” be addressed using conditional terms such as “as able” or “to the best of our ability.” Oftentimes, this language becomes a placeholder because we may not have the expertise to know what really needs to be done. The historic viewpoint was that people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs were the weak link in our ascension to the summit of comprehensive emergency management.

A change in perspective brings a change in perception, and efforts to collaborate with disability providers and disability-led organizations began as a means to fill the knowledge gap. Emergency managers began to understand that maybe disability organizations weren’t a weak link but an open carabiner clip. Perhaps by engaging with these community experts, emergency managers and planners could expedite our ascension. And partnerships began to emerge around planning tables.

Over the last several years, the research of the World Institute on Disability (WID) Emergency Preparedness, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Climate Resilience team heard from sources across the country that creating partnerships was a great beginning but it came with its own set of challenges. Disability experts didn’t always understand emergency management, organizations had their own bandwidth and expectations, communication could be difficult, and partner agencies didn’t always have answers that could be operationalized. Specifically, emergency managers and responders said that the barriers to partnerships were:

- Effectively communicating with and receiving actionable information from partners;
- Sourcing and providing the accessible supplies, resources, facilities and funding for the community needs; and
- Acquiring and coordinating accessible transportation. In essence, knowing what ‘should’ happen didn’t provide the information on ‘how’ to make it happen.

There needed to be a better way to partner. We had to use the carabiner clip differently.

In 2020, as COVID-19 began to bring down the full weight of a pandemic on the systems of service, WID connected with multiple agencies and private partners to initiate an alternative strategy that leveraged the local disability-led organizations as equitable partners with specific roles to do what they did best – focus on achieving accessible and inclusive programs and services. The Global Alliance for Disaster Resource Acceleration (GADRA) was comprised of international disability-led organizations, private corporations and agency representatives. The mission, to fill the gap that results in people with disabilities being left behind, being disproportionately impacted, and being two to four times more likely to be injured or die from disasters. GADRA matched disability-led organizations directly with known or novel resources; focusing specifically on the needs of people with disabilities in the disaster impacted community, and allowing the disability-led organization to apply their expertise to operationalizing meeting the needs. The GADRA application of the whole community principle “strengthen what works well in the community” but expediting assets directly to these organizations was an initial striking success. A powerful alternative path up the hill to inclusive emergency response had been identified.

Through, the development of a secure, accessible, and multi-lingual virtual emergency operations center, GADRA was able to coordinate matching needs to resources for multiple organizations in multiple disasters over multiple continents. This strategy was applied to assist a small DLO in Ukraine to evacuate thousands of people with disabilities and their families out of the country and out of danger during the first year of the war and to coordinate delivery of four shipping containers of disability related equipment and supplies requested by DLOs in Türkiye and Syria after the 7.8 magnitude earthquake and 22,000 aftershocks when the governments were unable to help.

This disability-led strategy brought inclusive response to new heights, but the success was eclipsed by the need. In 18 months, the virtual EOC had received 53 requests from five continents and was engaged in 18 unique disaster activations. As a collaboration of DLOs with no government support, GADRA’s capabilities were tested and vulnerabilities were identified. Matching disability experts directly with resources mitigated the challenges of traditional partnerships where DLOs were not able to be fully engaged and utilize their understanding of the community need; but they lacked the logistics expertise to execute responses effectively. Coordination, communication, and knowledge gaps created barriers to navigating international customs, shipping processes, disaster impacts to the banking systems, recovery of organizational documents, and the disaster devastation to the DLOs themselves. These barriers had significant impact on the response time and efficiency. Additionally, because they were both impacted organizations, disaster survivors,

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# Ascending to New Heights: Empowering Higher Education with Advanced FC/FAC Operations and Planning Tools

By Vanessa Flores, Deputy Director, University of California, Irvine

The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on Nov. 20 from 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Institutions of higher education face unique challenges in preparing for and responding to mass violence incidents (MVIs). While the primary focus during such events has traditionally been on neutralizing threats and providing immediate medical care, the importance of a comprehensive, victim-centered response is increasingly recognized. This shift is reflected in the development of new resources and tools designed specifically for institutions of higher education (IHE). These resources are aligned with standardized terminology and protocols established by leading agencies such as the FBI, the National Mass Violence Center (NMVC), and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), ensuring a consistent and effective response across campuses.

One of the key advancements in these new resources is the adoption of standardized terminology. Historically, the lack of consistency in language used during emergency responses has led to confusion and miscommunication, both on campus and in coordination with external agencies. The newly developed products for victim-based response incorporate terminology that aligns with the FBI, NMVC, and NTSB, ensuring that all stakeholders—whether they are campus security, local law enforcement, or federal agencies—are speaking the same language.

For example, terms such as Family and Friends Center (FC) and Family Assistance Center (FAC) are now clearly defined and distinguished.

An FC is a temporary location set up immediately following an incident to provide initial support and information to survivors and their loved ones. The FAC, on the other hand, is a more permanent facility that offers comprehensive services including mental health support, victim identification, and reunification efforts as the response progresses. By standardizing these terms, higher education institutions can more effectively coordinate their efforts with external partners during a crisis.

In addition to standardized terminology, the new resources include a suite of plan templates and supporting documents specifically tailored to the needs of IHEs. These templates have been carefully designed to address the unique challenges that universities and colleges face during an MVI, from managing large, open campuses to addressing the diverse needs of a student body that may include international students, minors, and individuals with disabilities.

These newly developed plan templates have been vetted and approved by the NMVC, the University and College Caucus, and the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) and will be accessible on the [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance \(TA\) Center Tool Box](#). They provide a comprehensive framework for emergency managers to develop and implement effective victim-based response plans. The templates cover all critical aspects

of a response, including the ability to ensure a clear chain of command and efficient decision-making during a crisis; setting up Family and Friends Centers (FCs) with guidelines for identifying locations, managing resources, and providing immediate support to affected individuals; and transitioning to Family Assistance Centers (FACs) with detailed steps for scaling up operations to provide ongoing support and services.

Additionally, these templates include communication strategies to ensure timely and accurate information is shared with survivors, their families, and the wider campus community, as well as protocols for collaboration with external partners, including local, state, and federal agencies, and community organizations. These templates are not only comprehensive but also flexible, allowing institutions to customize them based on their specific needs and resources. The goal is to ensure that every campus is equipped with a robust, victim-centered response plan that can be activated at a moment's notice.

Recognizing the importance of practical training in ensuring the effectiveness of these plans, a new basic training program for Family and Friends Centers (FC) and Family Assistance Centers (FAC) has been developed. This training, launching in the fall through REMS TA, will be available both in-person and virtually, making it accessible to institutions

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## Empowering Higher Education

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across the country.

The training program is designed to equip IHEs with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement the FC/FAC plan templates and supporting resources. It covers a range of critical topics, including setting up and managing an FC/FAC, coordinating with external agencies, providing psychological first aid, utilizing technology and data management for tracking victims and managing information, and ensuring cultural competency and accessibility in service provision.

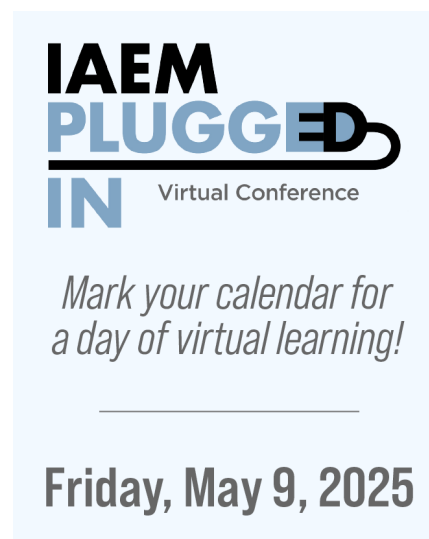
The development of these new resources and training programs marks a significant step forward in enhancing the preparedness and resilience of higher education institutions in the face of MVIs. By aligning with national standards and providing tailored practical tools, these resources empower IHEs to respond effectively to crises, prioritizing the needs of victims and their families.

Moreover, the collaboration with respected organizations such as the NMVC, the University and College Caucus, and IAEM underscores the credibility and reliability of these products. Institutions can be confident that they are implementing best practices that have been thoroughly vetted by experts in the field.

As the training program launches this fall, IHEs are encouraged to participate and integrate these resources into their existing emergency management frameworks. By doing so, they not only enhance their preparedness but also contribute to a broader culture of safety and resilience across the higher education community.

In conclusion, the newly developed products and training for victim-based response to mass violence incidents represent a critical

advancement in campus safety. By adopting standardized terminology, utilizing tailored plan templates, and participating in comprehensive training, institutions of higher education can ensure that they are prepared to meet the needs of their communities during the most challenging of times. This proactive approach not only saves lives but also fosters a sense of security and trust within the campus community, demonstrating a deep commitment to the well-being of all its members. ◆



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## Leveraging Disability Leadership

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and responding agents who were functioning on the periphery of the incident, many DLOs found themselves struggling to keep up and not adequately integrated into the resources and communication streams of other agency responders, VOADs or humanitarian aid actors.

In 2024, four years after the initial launch that was driven by human initiative, GADRA is expanding its technology capacity, elevating their virtual Emergency Operations Center capabilities to enable shared API, match and logistics automation, individualized DLO support to conduct needs assessments and operational plans using an AI agent,

and generative machine learning to identify the right resources at the right times, from the right source. Integrating AI into disability inclusive emergency response has great potential to address many of the barriers to partnership that are currently being experienced in responses in the United States and around the world. By guiding DLOs through a strategic evaluation process, an AI agent can bring the DLO to the table with a clearer understanding of how their expertise can be leveraged within the incident command system. Secured mechanisms to share API can eliminate both duplication of efforts and most importantly the gaps that directly and indirectly exclude people with disabilities from accessing response and recovery programs and services. Predictive analysis can assist in development of accurate inclusive planning efforts. And an integrated virtual community of practice can allow the lived-experiences and lessons learned from one DLO to inform the strategies of another DLO anywhere around the world, creating an ever-increasing cache of recommended practices.

Improved and strengthened strategies will always create more opportunities for improvement. And applying advances in technology to a long-standing need to “not leave anyone behind” brings with it the obligation to implement rights-based values and universal access into the technology tools themselves. AI technology can be a powerful mechanism to inclusion or the source of compounding exclusion. As we continue to ascend towards comprehensive emergency management we must remain committed to inclusion of our disability expert partners across the disaster-life cycle and flexible to apply new and emerging tools and initiatives that leverage all of our lived-experience and lessons learned along the way. ◆

# Creating Community Partnerships with Non-traditional Emergency Responders

By Esther Johnson, Emergency Preparedness Specialist, Capital Metro

The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on Nov. 19 from 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**B**uilding relationships with our community can take time and it's not always easy, but those relationships are crucial during an emergency. Most, if not all, partnerships are formed under the stress of an emergency with the goal of "getting back to normal." Partnering with non-traditional responders is one way to ensure vulnerable populations within your community aren't overlooked or marginalized, and that everyone within the community is safe and cared for during an emergency.

CapMetro is a transportation agency, not a traditional emergency responder, but the agency plays an incredibly large role within the community and has taken on a more critical responsibility when it comes to emergency response in the Central Texas region. The Austin area has seen an uptick in more winter weather events, the most significant being Winter Storm Uri in 2021. During this emergency, CapMetro's transportation services were disrupted, and the agency was able to adapt to provide essential services to the community. This system-wide shutdown was the first in CapMetro's history. The agency had to change how it operated to ensure emergency, life-sustaining services for transit-dependent and paratransit customers. With more and more emergencies in the Austin area, CapMetro has become an established emergency response partner and has looked to other community partners to enhance the agency's service to the region.

To develop relationships with non-traditional responders, there are

key things you should do:

- Identify gaps within your organization.
- Survey your resources.
- Understand the limitations for you and your partners.

These steps will serve as the beginning of a roadmap for your agency's needs, will identify available resources, and will help avoid overextending your capabilities.

## Identify Gaps

Identifying gaps can be a painful and uncomfortable exercise, but it's an important one for your agency. Despite the awkwardness of the findings, you will have identified areas for improvement that can make a positive change within your community.

As an agency, you can perform a gap analysis. There are various tools and techniques available, but the overall analysis should involve stakeholders to get realistic feedback. This can be done through constructive customer and community feedback from surveys or other customer service tools. By using some or all these tools you can create a list of gaps that could be better filled by your community partners. Therefore, freeing up your resources that can be better used elsewhere. When you are evaluating what assistance or partnerships might help your jurisdiction, you should consider gaps in existing plans, as well as the areas within your community that may not have enough coverage, relationships, or even know what they should do

during an emergency.

By asking the questions below, you can get a head start on identifying those gaps:

- What information, resources, or services do we not have during emergencies?

- Knowing what you don't know or don't have access to in an emergency is almost as valuable as the things you do know. Understanding your agency's capability gaps is paramount and gives your agency a path forward to create relationships.

- Is a community partner already doing that?

- This partner would already have established networks, contacts, and trust within that community.

- Who are potential community partners currently serving?

- The partner could already be working on the same gap or issue that your agency has identified. Using these community partnerships with established networks and processes, you don't have to recreate these networks and build trust in the community during the time of an emergency.

## Survey Your Resources

As a community, surveying your resources and knowing what you bring to the table is critical and is the most effective way to build a community partnership. Working with other departments within your agency to create a list of capabilities and available resources is a great way to be able to collaborate with a community

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## Emergency Management's Virtual Ascension

By John Case, RN, MS, BS, BSN, Emergency Manager, Mount Sinai Health System

**D**o you remember being an emergency manager in the “pre-virtual” days—when people gathered in a cramped command center, documents were actually printed, and PowerPoints were shown on a screen using a projector? It seems like those days are now behind us as emergency management ascends into the virtual future.

Virtual platforms such as Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams have brought EM into the future and given us the ability to easily link to hundreds, if not thousands of other emergency managers, colleagues, staff, and the public itself, and we don't even have to leave our office chair. Some of us lucky few don't even have to leave the chair in our own home! I believe this ability to be virtual was one of the few good things that the pandemic brought us.

The last four years have seen unparalleled growth in the forms of communication tools within emergency management and all of them have arrived at a very fast pace. The introduction of remote work has forced technology companies to quickly accelerate to keep up with the demands that all of us emergency managers were placing on them. In April 2020, we were all trying to run IMT meetings and webinars with a seemingly endless amount of attendees who all wanted to be on video and talk at the same time using technology we had only barely discovered.

Zoom seemed to rise to the challenge the quickest by increasing bandwidths and bringing additional servers online throughout the world to handle the amount of traffic that seemed to increase tenfold for them overnight. They enabled additional

permissions and settings, added the “Mute All” button (imagine being able to do that in a physical command center), and gave each of us the ability to lose the green curtain and put up our unique digital backdrop (I've seen many different backgrounds: hundreds of beach scenes, so many bookshelves, a lot of fire trucks, fancy studies that suddenly reveal a messy room each time the participant moves their head, a weird picture of Beetlejuice, the bridge of the Starship Enterprise, and at one point I had a gigantic NYC pepperoni pizza displayed behind my head).

Microsoft Teams became the next major player in the virtual world. They gave EMs the ability to not only run meetings but also share and edit documents in real-time, use whiteboards, and set up many different channels in which to group agencies and functional teams could work together. Invites were seamlessly integrated into Outlook email and would immediately show up on my calendar without me having to type the information in (the line between laziness and efficiency is thin).

As we have seen, however, not all of the virtual world has been positive. It seems that anyone can just throw a meeting on my calendar now so I find myself in an endless loop of virtual meetings all day from my desk. So many meetings in fact that, ironically, I have to schedule myself “out of office” to get any real work done. I've even had some meetings overlap which forced me to listen to both meetings at the same time, one on the computer and one on my phone. (If you ever wanted to force a hard workout on your brain try that for an hour). We also now have the issue of incessant

background noises (dogs barking, traffic noise, sirens, toilets flushing) and participants being oblivious to the fact they are not on mute and we can clearly hear them talking to the clerk about their lunchtime bottle of wine they are purchasing or telling another person they “have to listen to this stupid meeting.” *Pro tip—If you are the meeting organizer and haven't become a master of the “mute participant” button, then find someone who is and have them help facilitate your meeting. Even the chat function can be distracting to the meeting presenter so it can help to have someone manage that for you as well.* The final negative is that it is too easy now for attendees to not pay full attention during a meeting and instead work on other tasks, browse Instagram, shop on Amazon, or even turn the camera off and sleep. I can't imagine that stuff happening in a physical meeting so it's a shame that it happens in the virtual world. *Pro tip—Ask everyone to turn their cameras on at the start of the meeting and try to engage participants by asking them direct questions or using polls to present questions to the entire group.*

Now that I have become so integrated into these technologies, I can't imagine going back to a non-virtual world. Of course, as EMs we always have the mantra of redundancy in the back of our minds knowing that someday these platforms may not be available (see: Coronal Mass Ejection direct hit, nuclear device detonation, devastating cyberattack, or application upgrade gone wrong). So not everything can remain in the digital cloud, we still need our boxes of pens

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## Non-traditional Emergency Responders [continued from page 10](#)

partner.

It's important you remember the questions below to help avoid duplication of effort, set realistic expectations for you and the partner, and allow the allocation of resources effectively together.

- What resources can you use within your agency?
- What resources does the community partner have available?
  - Resources that exist within your agency may not be what you think as responders. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, CapMetro deployed buses equipped with Wi-Fi capability to different parts of the Austin area for children to attend online school.
- What is the mission? Define the capability gap.
  - Since you have identified the capability gaps within your agency, are you still able to complete the mission of your agency?
- What are the capabilities to provide options and alternatives for the execution of operations?
  - For example, CapMetro turned its mission on its head during several winter storms, bringing goods and services to people instead of bringing people to goods and services. We did this by doing door-to-door water and food delivery with our paratransit vehicles and operators.
- Do these community partners and organizations do equity work that meets your community needs?

### Understand Limitations

Understanding partner limitations ties in with surveying your agency's resources and knowing what your agency has to offer in a partnership. Understanding both your agency and your partners'

limitations helps set the expectations for you and the partner and focuses on the strengths each brings to the partnership.

So, to help avoid overburdening each other keep in mind these key steps:

- What are the limitations of your agency?
  - What are your agency's policies and procedures? Are there emergency policies and procedures in place?
    - Knowing your agency's policies and procedures is key to completing the mission during an emergency.
- What kind of agreements do you already have in place? Can you expand on them in an emergency?
  - Having an agreement already in place before an emergency is critical. Being able to rely on these agreements will only better serve your agency.
- What are the limitations of a partnership?
- Does the partner have any service contracts or restrictions that could limit their response?
  - For example, CapMetro must follow Federal Transit Administration Charter Bus Service Regulations, which prohibit transit agencies from using federally funded assets to provide charter services that can be provided by a commercial charter carrier, with limited exceptions. There is an emergency exception, but it is narrow in scope and does not always cover every proposed emergency activity. Our partners understand this and try to ensure their requests fall under the narrow scope of the exception.

In Central Texas, innovative partnerships have been leveraged multiple times during emergency events in the last few years. Building effective community partnerships is essential for your community's emergency response. By identifying gaps within your agency or service, surveying available resources, and understanding both your agency and

your potential community partner's limitations, agencies can collaborate with non-traditional responders to enhance their capabilities.

Once your agency has established community partnerships, it's important to actually be a good community partner. Work with your partners outside of an emergency, be open-minded and creative to achieve common goals, and as a partner be willing to hear the word no and be open to alternatives. By asking the right questions and fostering collaborative relationships, agencies can build a more resilient and effective emergency response that benefits both the agency and the community.



## Virtual Ascension

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and hardcopy EOPs and appendices and checklists for when the power goes out. We still need a physical space to gather in, hopefully with a projector that works. And we still need to leave our offices and meet face-to-face with our colleagues. A virtual thumbs-up or cartoon smiley face can never replace the in-person handshake or reassuring smile that we EMs love to provide during catastrophes. ◆

*Note: The author has no affiliation or promotional status with the aforementioned products, they are simply the tools that he has personally used in the past three years and would by no means consider him an expert in their usage and capabilities.*



# Overcoming Barriers in Alert and Warning Systems

By Jorge Rodriguez, CEM, Community Alert and Warning Program Manager,  
County of Sonoma - Department of Emergency Management

The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on  
Nov. 18 from 11:00 a.m-12:00 p.m.

In times of crisis, one of the most critical responsibilities of emergency managers is ensuring that communities receive timely and accurate information. The IAEM 2024 Annual Conference theme of “Emergency Management Ascending” highlights the ongoing need to enhance and refine the systems we rely on to alert the public. More than just pushing the “big red” button, we must know and understand those barriers to effective alert and warning (A&W) systems and examine how advancements in technology, policy, and education can help us overcome these challenges to better protect our communities.

## Barriers Beyond Our Control

While many aspects of A&W systems can be improved through better management and training, there are some factors that emergency managers cannot control directly. However, acknowledging these barriers and developing strategies to address them is essential.

■ **Recipient behavior and spam filters:** Many people unknowingly prevent themselves from receiving critical alerts by silencing their phones, activating “Do Not Disturb” (DND) or spam filter modes, or simply turning off their devices, and blocking numbers perceived as spam. Educating the public about the importance of keeping phones accessible during emergencies, along with other outreach efforts, should focus on raising awareness about the critical role A&W systems play in protecting lives, and encouraging

residents to take proactive steps to ensure they receive alerts.

■ **System fragility:** The reliability of cellular networks and other communication infrastructures is often compromised during disasters, particularly in rural or mountainous areas. Cell towers can be damaged or lose power, rendering mass notification systems ineffective. To build redundancy, emergency managers should consider incorporating alternative communication methods as these backup methods can provide additional layers of protection when primary systems fail.

## The Future of A&W Systems

As emergency management continues to evolve, the future of A&W systems lies in innovation, adaptability, and redundancy. By addressing the challenges outlined above, emergency managers can ensure that their systems are more reliable, equitable, and capable of reaching all members of their communities.

■ **Investing in a multi-system approach:** No single A&W system is perfect. Each technology—whether it be WEA, NOAA weather radios, sirens, or mass notification systems—comes with its limitations. The key to overcoming these limitations is redundancy. Combining systems that are not reliant on each other, helps create a more robust and dependable system overall.

■ **Strengthening community education:** A crucial part of A&W success is ensuring that residents understand how these systems work and what actions they should take when they receive an alert. Commu-

nity outreach programs should also focus on building public trust in A&W systems by being transparent about how they work and what steps are being taken to improve them.

■ **Policy development and standardization:** Consistent policies and procedures are vital for ensuring that A&W systems operate smoothly and effectively. By having these procedures in place, jurisdictions can minimize confusion during emergencies and ensure that all alert originators follow the same protocols.

## Conclusion

The future of emergency management depends on our ability to ascend beyond the barriers that currently limit our A&W systems. By focusing on database management, multi-system redundancy, and community education, emergency managers can build more resilient systems that are capable of reaching all residents, even in the most challenging circumstances.

While there are uncontrollable factors, we can still take steps to mitigate these challenges through innovation, policy development, and consistent community engagement. By elevating our approach to A&W systems, we are ensuring that emergency management continues to progress and that our communities are better prepared for whatever challenges lie ahead. ♦

# Pierce County Safety Summit: Strengthening Partnerships for Community Resilience

By Jacquelyn Meier, Preparedness Supervisor, Pierce County, Department of Emergency Management; and Emily Cunningham, Training and Exercise Coordinator, Pierce County Department of Emergency Management

The authors will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on Nov. 18 from 9:45-10:45 a.m.

In 2023, the inaugural Pierce County Safety Summit marked a pivotal moment for emergency management and community safety for the county. As the frequency, intensity, and duration of emergency events continue to rise, the summit emerged as a vital forum for fostering collaboration among diverse partner agencies. By bringing together partners from education, local government, public safety, and community organizations, the summit aimed to reinforce existing relationships and create a more integrated approach to emergency response and recovery.

## Building Stronger Relationships

The focus of the Safety Summit was the recognition that strong partnerships are essential for effective emergency management. In a time when communities face increasingly complex challenges—ranging from natural disasters to public health crises—the ability to work together can significantly enhance response efforts. The summit allowed participants to share insights, experiences, and best practices.

Through workshops and panel discussions, attendees had the opportunity to engage directly with leaders in the field. This not only fostered camaraderie but also laid the groundwork for future collaborations. When agencies know each other's strengths and capabilities, they can respond to emergencies more efficiently and effectively.

## Addressing Current Topics Impacting Pierce County

The summit was also timely, addressing pressing issues that affect Pierce County today. With topics such as natural disasters, youth violence, and community resilience taking center stage, participants had the chance to discuss local challenges and solutions. This inclusive approach ensured that all voices were heard, particularly those of community leaders and educators.

By inviting leadership from various sectors, the summit created an environment where decision-makers could engage directly with frontline responders and subject matter experts. This direct participation is vital; it cultivates a shared understanding of the complexities involved in emergency management and leads to more informed policies and decisions for elected and appointed leaders.

## The Need for a Countywide Reunification Plan

One significant outcome of the 2023 summit was the need for a countywide reunification plan. In emergencies, ensuring the safety and reunification of families is critical. Additionally, returning personal property to families of victims and survivors is an essential part of recovery. Discussions sparked by the summit led to the realization that while some partners already had reunification plans in place, there was a need for a comprehensive, county-wide strat-

egy that integrates the efforts of all agencies.

The summit emphasized the importance of joint training exercises that involve multiple disciplines. Coordinated training not only strengthens individual capabilities but also builds trust and familiarity among partners. Participants recognized when multiple agencies and disciplines train together, they can identify gaps in preparedness and improve response efforts.

## Reflecting on the 2024 Pierce County Safety Summit

The 2024 Pierce County Safety Summit built on the success of the inaugural event, expanding both in scope and participation. The primary focus of this year's summit was reunification, building off of the 2023 Safety Summit. During the summit, participants received updates on the county-wide reunification plan development, highlighting areas of improvement and the steps taken to address any gaps identified in the initial phases.

Expert speakers played a crucial role in bridging those gaps, offering valuable insights drawn from real-world experiences. Presentations included lessons learned from significant incidents such as the 2011 Joplin tornado, the Route 91 Harvest Festival shooting, and the Uvalde critical

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## Pierce County Safety Summit

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incident review. These case studies shed light on essential areas such as mass casualty response, incident command, and the unique challenges associated with family reunification. By reflecting on these high-profile events, Pierce County was able to further refine its reunification strategy, enhancing the preparedness and resilience of the community for future emergencies.

Another key topic at the 2024 summit was addressing youth violence, a growing concern within the region. The summit featured dedicated sessions on understanding the root causes of youth violence and explored both prevention and intervention strategies. By tackling this critical issue head-on, Pierce County aimed to foster a safer environment for young residents, contributing to the overall safety and resilience of the community.

This year's summit saw a broader range of participants, an increase in presenters, and a larger policy symposium. The event once again emphasized the importance of strong, collaborative relationships among agencies, ensuring a more integrated and effective approach to managing incidents within Pierce County. The 2024 summit reinforced Pierce County's commitment to continuous improvement in emergency management.

### Increasing Trust in Emergency Management

Trust is a cornerstone of effective emergency management. One of the most significant outcomes of the 2023 Pierce County Safety Summit was the deepening of trust among agencies, community leaders, and emergency responders. The Safety Summit cultivated trust



*Action shots taken during the 2023 Pierce County Safety Summit.*

among participants by fostering transparency and open communication through discussions and shared experiences. This trust is crucial not only for immediate response efforts but also for long-term recovery and resilience-building. The relationships forged and the trust built during the summit will serve as the foundation for even greater cooperation in future emergencies, reinforcing Pierce County's capacity to manage disasters and safeguard its residents.

### Conclusion

The Pierce County Safety Summit of 2023 represented a critical step toward enhancing community safety and resilience. By bringing

together a diverse array of partners, the summit fostered collaboration, reinforced relationships, and identified key areas for improvement. This is an important accomplishment as emergencies become more frequent and severe. Looking forward, we will continue to hold safety summits that focus on the most pressing issues facing our community, ensuring that Pierce County remains at the forefront of emergency preparedness and response. The commitment to working together will undoubtedly lead to a stronger, more resilient Pierce County, prepared to face the challenges ahead. ♦



## Private Sector Incident Management— The Whataburger Way

By Ron Derrick, Senior Emergency Manager, Whataburger Command Center

The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on  
Nov. 18 from 2:15-3:15 p.m.

Whataburger was born from one man's dream in 1950 when Harmon Dobson opened a small building selling burgers for just 25 cents in Corpus Christi, Texas. His idea was for someone to hold up the burger and think to themselves "Wow, What-A-Burger." The name has stuck and the company has gone from a little shack in Corpus Christi to over 1050 restaurants across 16 states. The "A-frame" shape is very iconic and a version of the A-frame is used in all new construction along with the flying "W." In 2001, the 77th Texas Legislature officially recognized what Texans had known for more than 50 years: Whataburger is designated a "Texas Treasure."

Whataburger Restaurants grew rapidly into many southern states and most units are open 24 hours. Executive leadership knew there were going to be issues and incidents that would need to be handled through an elite team that had emergency management and crisis response experience and expertise. The company formed the Whataburger Command Center which originally consisted of four individuals who were dedicated to a mission of identifying potential threats and incidents that could impact or threaten family members (employees), customers, units, or brand reputation. After the beginning of COVID-19 in March 2020, and after several company re-organizations between 2020 and 2023, the Command Center team now has one senior manager and one professional running a very "high-level" command center.

This team operates using multiple vendors to help identify, analyze, and verify information coming into the command center.

The Whataburger Command Center team uses a hybrid form of the Incident Command System and the team's mission is to **prepare, identify, respond, and recover** from a crisis or an unexpected event that threatens the stability, reputation, or operations of the company's family members, buildings, franchisees and support departments. It involves a wide range of activities and strategies designed to mitigate the impact of the crisis and to protect the interests of Whataburger and its stakeholders.

### Prepare

The Whataburger Command Center's preparedness initiative is to not only ensure each unit and operator is prepared to respond to a myriad of emergent incidents but to also ensure the command center staff and core team are educated on incidents around the United States that may or may not have impact to the Whataburger enterprise. First, the command center ensures operational and field teams are prepared. The team does this through a variety of platforms including videos produced at the home office and sent to operators and field staff. Next, the team provides virtual training to regions that find it difficult and cost-prohibitive to bring their entire team to one location. The team also provides in-person training to the teams in the field as much

as possible. Part of the command center concept depends upon trust and understanding from the field. Field teams and operations have to know the command center has their back during all emergency and non-emergent incidents. They know when they hear from the command center, it is the "Voice of Truth" and they will follow the direction given. Lastly, the command center prepares teams through generous email and text communications. The command center sends emails and texts to operations and field teams about upcoming potentially impacting events such as weather, heat preparedness, hurricane preparedness, personal severe weather preparedness, and other issues that could impact the business and/or family members. The team does this by using a mass communication program which makes it much easier to send multiple messages rapidly to the same group through the use of templates.

### Identify

The majority of threats to Whataburger units across the 16-state layout come from Mother Nature. Torrential Spring weather, severe Winter weather, and active tropical weather seasons keep the command center team very busy year-round. To help identify severe weather threats, Whataburger uses two weather vendors. One for severe weather on land and one for tropical weather during

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## The Whataburger Way

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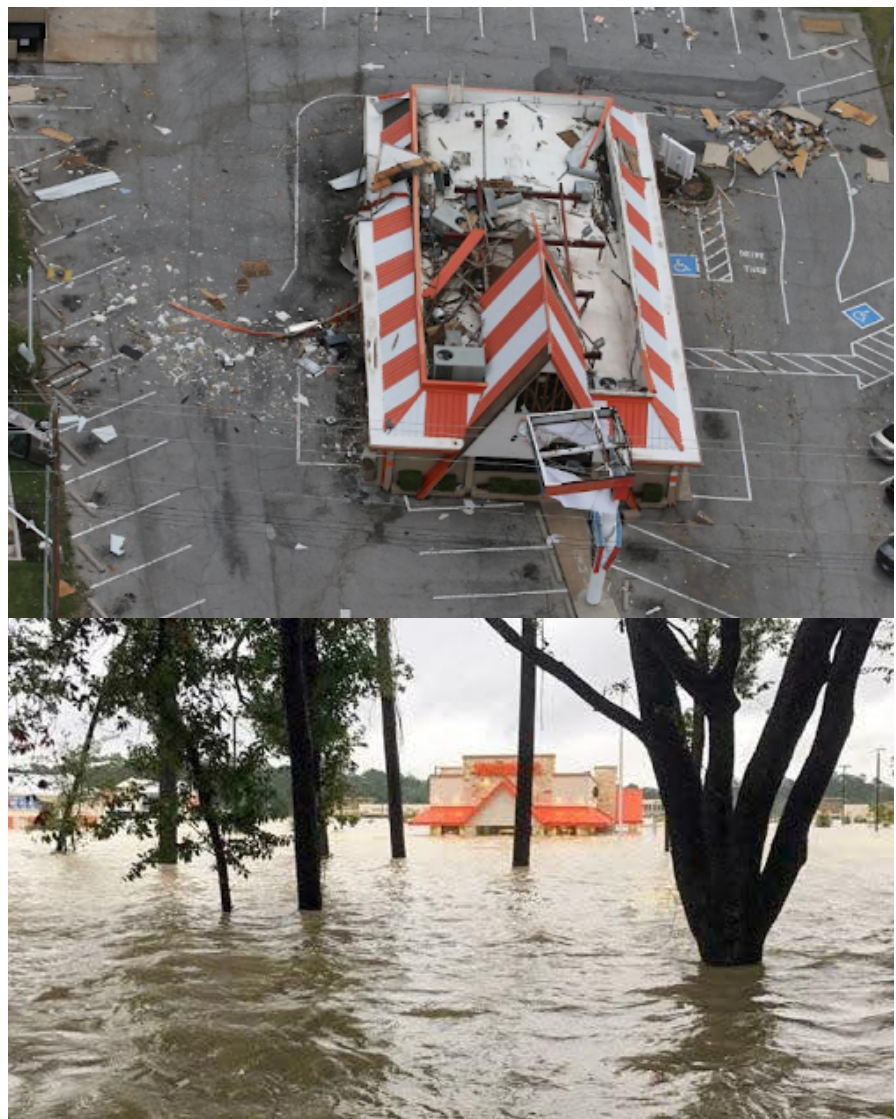
hurricane season. Severe weather impacts one or more units across the Whataburger 16 state enterprise every day and getting that information out expeditiously to units and field leaders is imperative. The team chooses to verify the information before it is sent out to units and field personnel. If the severe weather threat is Winter weather, the team will send this information to units as soon as possible so they can start planning their staffing and product needs if roads are going to be closed. The team learned many lessons from Winter Storm Uri in Feb. 2021, which included disseminating severe weather information early and often.

The Whataburger Command Center also uses a tropical system weather vendor for threats coming from the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico during hurricane season. This vendor assists the command center in identifying, analyzing, responding to—and recovering from—tropical events that potentially impact coastal units. When it is evident a storm is going to make landfall near our units, the tropical weather vendor provides the team with tropical meteorologists on all conference calls to give the command center, operations, franchisees, and support departments the latest information and forecast so preparations and proper closures can take place. This information is used to be able to make the best company and unit safety decisions.

Weather is not the only potential threat or activity the command center monitors and assesses. There are other activities such as power or water outages, boil water advisories, technology outages, fires, protests, demonstrations, social media, employee health, vehicle

strikes, drive-thru issues, robberies, employee safety/injuries, fights, food safety, and new unit openings. Whataburger is also currently opening a new unit once a week. To identify threats across a wide area, it takes really good threat intelligence. The command center uses two threat intelligence vendors to get a clear vision and analysis of what is taking place around units, offices, learning centers, and major suppliers. The information given to the command center includes a brief description of

the threat, distance from the monitored location, the severity of the threat, when it occurred, and the ability to speak to an analyst to garner additional information about the incident. The team can then make educated decisions on who to engage and how urgent this incident is to the business. The command center has to be able to send the right information, to the right people, by the right means, at the right time.



*Examples of emergency situations the Whataburger team is prepared to respond to.*

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## The Whataburger Way

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### Response

The command center team provides strong leadership, clear and concise communication, and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances when responding to escalated incidents.

The Whataburger Core Incident Team is composed of key stakeholders from each support department and operations. These individuals are empowered to represent their department and make on-the-spot decisions. These individuals provide knowledge from their area of expertise and making/influencing decisions that impact operations and brand reputation. This is a very dynamic team. Not all members are used for every incident. It will be determined by the command center team which of the Core team members it will take to respond and recover from the incident.

The command center team has 24 incident playbooks which are step-by-step plans that outline the tasks and procedures each team will perform when responding to a specific incident. The tasks and procedures are updated after each incident and also annually. Along with the playbooks is a communications matrix that outlines who the team communicates with, by what means, and how often. There are also lists, checklists, and logs used by response teams. Most major responses such as



*Whataburger uses its food truck and volunteers to help communities in their time of need.*

hurricanes are divided into phases, and the procedures performed by each team are dependent upon which phase of the incident they find themselves in.

### Recovery

The number one priority once the incident has concluded is family member and customer safety. Whataburger goes to great lengths to make sure all family members are given time to personally recover first. Once Whataburger knows the staff is good to go, they use the recovery process to restore restaurants and the business to normal operations and hours. Any needs from family members are addressed by the Whataburger Family Foundation. Through it all, Whataburger remains committed to investing in the communities they serve. Whataburger

marketing and public relations teams will infiltrate the impacted area to assess how Whataburger can fill voids or feed recovery teams and first responders after a critical event and ensure the community's needs are met. Whataburger uses its food truck and volunteers to help communities in their time of need by either raising money for the community or feeding families in their time of need.

The final recovery process, after all family members, customers, and communities have fully recovered, is for the command center team to facilitate an after-action review, including lessons learned, best practices, and opportunities for improvement. These ideas are used to update all playbooks and to update task lists used by each department when responding to an escalated incident.



# The Worst Season Ever: The Winter of 2022-23 Tripledemic

By Brigitte Glines, CA-PEM, CEM, DVM, UCSF Hub Manager, Pediatric Pandemic Network;  
and Chris Riccardi, Emergency Management and Business Continuity Manager,  
Children's Hospital of Orange County

The authors will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on  
Nov. 18 from 11:00 a.m-12:00 p.m.

Who doesn't love a great sports game? Usually, two teams face off in an exciting match between the offense and the defense. The respiratory season of 2022-23 resembled a lopsided sporting match. The offense was incredibly powerful and sneaky, while the defense was getting pummeled and exhausted. In the sporting world, we know that defense wins championships and in the winter of 2022-23, the battle between the offense and the defense resulted in a monstrously mismatched season.

## The Preseason

Since at least 2008, pediatric inpatient capacity has been declining in general hospitals in the United States. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the higher number of adults versus pediatric patients prompted general hospitals to repurpose their pediatric units for adult care. By the end of 2020, the pediatric acute care system had its lowest capacity in at least two decades. Going into the autumn of 2022, rumors were trickling of a nasty offensive line of viruses already beginning to attack our nation's youngest population. An earlier-than-expected increase in cases of flu, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and COVID-19 were being reported.

## The Offensive Line: Flu, RSV and COVID-19

Flu (also known as influenza) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Flu can cause mild to severe illness and is spread by tiny droplets when people cough, sneeze, or talk. Flu typically occurs every fall and winter (since the dawn of time). RSV is **also** a very common respiratory virus in humans all over the world. RSV causes mild-ish illness in healthy adults; however, it can cause very severe illness in infants, younger than 1 year, and older adults. RSV **also** typically occurs every fall and winter. COVID-19 is a relatively new player to the fall-winter respiratory virus lineup. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Much like the flu and RSV, COVID-19 is primarily a respiratory virus and is spread by tiny droplets. Due to its relative newness, experts aren't sure about the seasonality of the virus—one thing is for certain, though—during the winter of 2022-23, COVID-19 was raging!

## The Defensive Line: Natural Immunity, Vaccines and Public Health Protocols

Natural immunity in children was relatively low going into the respiratory season of 2022-23. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many children were never exposed to the viruses most kids see multiple times by the time they're three or four and

their immune systems were very immature. Vaccines were in existence for all three of the diseases on the offensive line in the winter of 2022-23; however, vaccine hesitancy for COVID-19 specifically, and vaccines in general, had increased, and many parents—and communities—were reluctant to get vaccinated. By the time Fall 2022 rolled around, many public health protocols that had previously kept the population safe throughout the pandemic had expired: no more masking requirements, resumption of social events, schools back to in-person learning

## The Outcome

A surge of pediatric patients across the country overwhelmed pediatric hospitals and flooded community healthcare facilities. The pediatric surge strained resources at children's hospitals — beds were simply not available to put patients in, creating an abnormal surge of pediatric patients at non-pediatric facilities. This surge also caused pediatric hospitals to get creative in using non-traditional spaces, such as gyms and playrooms, to meet the challenge. Another identified issue was the lack of available medication that strained the hospital's capabilities to treat sick patients. Many emergency departments across the United States are ill-equipped to handle pediatric

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## Winter of 2022-23 Tripledemic

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cases, which resulted in suboptimal care for many children. This viral tripledemic created a triple whammy on healthcare facilities which caused supply shortages, lack of pediatric bed availability (with little visibility on where open beds were available in their region), and staffing shortages as a result of healthcare workers becoming sick themselves, due to the regular fall/winter viruses or their inability to work due to caring for their sick children at home.

## The Offseason and Gameplan Going Forward

How can we mitigate another tripledemic in the future? Build the **infrastructure** for all healthcare facilities to navigate and conquer a surge—a mass casualty incident with both adult **and** pediatric patients! Prepare non-pediatric healthcare facilities for an influx of pediatric patients when the children’s hospitals are at or above capacity. Utilize resources already available: Pediatric Disaster Centers of Excellence (PDCOE), the Pediatric Pandemic Network (all-hazards, not just pandemics!), Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Innovation and Improvement Center (EIIC), your local

children’s hospitals, your healthcare coalitions—the options are endless! Implement a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) response plan to ensure that all hospitals have the resources on hand to help mitigate these challenges. A phenomenal example of a game plan fitting this need is the 15 ‘til 50 MCI Response Program, which has both an adult and pediatric version and is applicable at all healthcare facilities, as well as other organizations. Once you have adopted the game plan for your facility, practice with your team. We all know plans don’t survive the first attack, so run through your plan multiple times to ensure your team is familiar with the actions they need to take to prevent a repeat of The Worst Season Ever! ◆

# Seeking Your Feedback

Help inform the future of the  
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Survey closes November 30





## Understanding the Mission of Local Emergency Planning Committees

By Timothy Gablehouse, Member, Colorado Emergency Planning Commission

The author will be speaking as part of the IAEM 72nd Annual Conference on Nov. 18 from 9:45-10:45 a.m.

Local emergency planning committees (LEPCs) are the backbone of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA). They are typically a collection of volunteers made up of local government employees, first response agencies, facility representatives, and members of the public. While EPCRA does contain a list of desired membership backgrounds and representation, most LEPCs do not have members in all those categories. Rarely will an LEPC have staff and even less often will that staff be either paid or applied to LEPC functions on a full-time basis.

The typical LEPC functions without a budget or with only a small amount of money frequently in the form of grants from the State Emergency Planning Commission (SERC) or local businesses. The chair and LEPC members often provide support from their own pockets or with discretionary funds from their employer's budgets.

LEPCs are frequently organized within the offices of a first response agency or local government office of emergency management. In such cases, it can be difficult to identify where the parent agency's activities end and the LEPCs begin. The functions are complementary and therefore that distinction is frequently misleading or of little importance in the day-to-day planning and preparedness of the community.

A limited reading of EPCRA gives the impression that the LEPCs are supposed to develop emergency response plans for hazardous substances. This can create a conflict if

it is routine for such plans to already exist within first response agencies and local emergency management offices. An LEPC that is housed within one of these agencies will have typically been involved in its planning activities. More independent LEPCs will frequently be active in providing information and input to these agencies to help them improve the plans.

In some communities, the LEPC has become a broader all-hazards emergency planning agency within the community. This happens when the cooperation and resources available within the LEPC make this the most efficient approach for that community. While not all SERCs have adopted policies on the coordination between LEPCs and other planning agencies, most encourage whatever arrangement is most productive for the community.

Most LEPCs consider and adopt projects based on core missions they feel are important in the community. These may involve a variety of matters but are generally focused on a desire to protect first responders and the public through better information and awareness of risks in the community. Consideration must be given to the resources available and the interests of the members. Most SERCs will support a vast range of LEPC activities if they have some relationship to the intent of EPCRA.

The greatest tool available to an LEPC is its very substantial information-gathering power. However, most SERCs encourage LEPCs to do more than just collect boxes of paper. Many LEPCs focus their activities on information requests that bring facil-

ities into closer cooperation with the first responder community. Examples are fire department approval of contingency plans, exercise organization, and public awareness of expected behavior during an emergency. EPA has memorialized this concept of "coordination and cooperation" in recent rulemaking on Risk Management Plans and Worst-Case Scenario planning under the Clean Water Act. These concepts are also addressed in ASTM Standard E3241-20, Standard Guide for Coordination and Cooperation between Facilities, Local Emergency Planning Committees, and Emergency Responders.

LEPCs also perform a generalized role in community-wide efforts to improve public awareness of risks and preparedness for emergencies. They will encourage very basic things such as emergency kits, first aid training, and household safety. Often, they will work on projects such as household hazardous waste collection, school lab chemical safety, and the hazards of methamphetamine labs.

Most SERCs will encourage LEPCs to think expansively as there are a myriad of other activities that may be useful in a community. The late Jim Makris—widely called the "father" of EPCRA—once said that it's best to think of LEPCs as local "environmental" protection committees as he saw them working more broadly to improve conditions in their communities.

One of the most difficult tasks faced by an LEPC is creating a public

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## Local Emergency Planning Committees

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awareness of risks and improving community preparedness. LEPCs should look for opportunities through schools, civic groups, youth programs, faith-based groups, and any other organization active in the community to accomplish this mission.

This means that LEPCs must embrace a broader sense of community responsibility for accident prevention and preparedness. It is not appropriate to be a passive collector of information. The below “Golden Rules” are proposed for the broader community.

Preferably it is the LEPCs that should lead the process of addressing the goals stated in the Golden Rules, but that is not the complete point. Whether or not an LEPC exists, leadership within a community needs to be focused on these issues. Leadership comes from various places depending upon the community, it may be elected leadership, first response agencies, or community groups. Whether or not called an LEPC, the functions must exist, or no community will be adequately involved in accident prevention or preparedness.

State and federal agencies along with facilities should have the expectation that communities will address these issues. This is consistent with the well-recognized civil right to adequate emergency planning. Communities cannot be passive in this regard. The risk is shared, and the responsibility for preparedness is equally shared. Preparedness cannot be imposed on a community, nor can it be provided from outside. All stakeholders have a responsibility to find and encourage appropriate leadership within the community.

The era of passivity in accident prevention and community pre-

paredness is gone. Whether facility, government, first response agency, or member of the public, we are all connected, and we all have a role.

The best examples of local emergency planning and preparedness focus on “Golden Rules” that will have the following attributes:

- A close relationship between emergency planners and first response agencies.
  - A close relationship between facilities and these agencies and the public.
  - Information sharing on hazards, accident prevention efforts, and emergency response.
  - Public involvement in developing expectations for public behavior during an emergency.
  - Repeated exercises of emergency response plans including public education.
  - Generalized all-hazards preparedness efforts developed with public involvement.
- We are mindful that in the past the regulatory environment has tended to create an adversary relationship between communities and facilities. From topics as diverse as land use planning and environmental permitting through emergency response, the relationship is often con-

frontational. LEPCs are not regulatory agencies. They have the capacity to break through this barrier for the greater good of their communities.

## Golden Rules for LEPCs/Communities

- While the primary responsibilities lie with the industry, there are important responsibilities for stakeholders at the local level.
- Be aware of the risks in your community and know what to do in the event of an accident.
- Communicate and co-operate with other stakeholders on all aspects of accident prevention, preparedness, and response.
- Participate in decision-making relating to hazardous installations
- Know the hazards and risks at installations in your community where there are hazardous substances.
- Prepare for any accidents that occur.
- Co-operate with local authorities, and industry, in emergency planning and response.
- Assist other stakeholders to carry out their respective roles and responsibilities. ◆



# EM Calendar

Nov. 15-21	<a href="#">IAEM Annual Conference</a> Colorado Springs, Colorado
Nov. 30	NJ EM Preparedness Conference —Call for Papers Deadline
April 21	National Radiological Emergency Preparedness Conference



The advertisement features the IAEM logo (International Association of Emergency Managers) in the top left corner. The background is a dark grey with a white hexagonal pattern on the right side. In the center, there is a large blue banner with the text "NOW HIRING" in white, followed by "Find your new job today!" in white. At the bottom, there is a white banner with the text "Visit the IAEM Job Board" in black, and a blue banner with the text "JOBS.IAEM.ORG" in white. The background also shows a row of four white chairs with wooden legs.

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