IAEM Bulletin

In This Issue

Index to General Focus Articles: Page 9

International Association of Emergency Managers

Strengthening Emergency Management in Times of Change

In times of shifting priorities and uncertainty, we are not just facing challenges—we are standing at the threshold of incredible opportunity for the emergency management community. Our profession has always been defined by resilience, leadership, and unwavering commitment to protect and support our communities. Now, more than ever, we have the chance to shape the future of emergency management.

If you are wondering how you can make the greatest impact right now, know that your voice, expertise, and dedication are invaluable. We must stand united—not dwelling on what we don't know but amplifying what we do. Emergency management is built on a foundation of knowledge, experience, and commitment to public safety. Elected officials, community leaders, and the next generation of emergency managers look to us for guidance, clarity, and strength.

IAEM's elected leaders and professional staff are actively engaged in efforts to advance the profession and influence critical policy discussions. These efforts include meetings with elected representatives and FEMA leadership, outreach to the White House, Government Affairs updates and our current Call to Action. IAEM is ensuring that the voice of the emergency management profession is heard at the highest levels.

Recently, IAEM reaffirmed its steadfast support for the emergency management profession in a letter to President Trump. The letter formally requested IAEM's inclusion in the newly established Federal Emergency Review Council as it assesses FEMA's role and considers reforms to the Stafford Act and Disaster Relief Fund. Representing the full spectrum of emergency management professionals, IAEM's expertise and commitment to strengthening the U.S. emergency management system uniquely position us to provide valuable insight into this critical review process.

Immediate Changes in Disaster Management

Emergency managers must adapt to evolving policies, including shifts in federal disaster management responsibilities to states, tribes, and local jurisdictions. While improvements to the system are welcome, rapid changes and initial cuts over reforms risk disrupting critical services and reducing capacity. To maintain preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts, a unified approach to messaging is essential.

Get to Know Your IAEM Leadership
IAEM-USA Region 2 President

Michael Prasad, CEM, Executive Director, The Center for Emergency Management Intelligence Research

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.

Michael currently resides in Fanwood, New Jersey, and has been an IAEM member for 10 years. You can connect with Michael on LinkedIn or email him at USARegion2President@iaem.com.

■ **Biographical sketch:** Mike is a Certified Emergency Manager and was elected president of the IAEM-USA for Region 2, which covers New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in Nov. 2024. He was regional vice president for the prior four years. He is also the past chair of the IAEM-USA's Children and Disaster Caucus. Mike has held emergency management director level positions at the State of New Jersey and the American Red Cross, including command and general staff roles on major disasters and events. He researches and writes professionally on emergency management policies and procedures from a pracademic perspective, advises non-governmental organizations on their continuity of operations planning, and has built, conducted, and evaluated multiple exercise series on an all-hazards/all-threats basis. His book "Emergency Management Threats and Hazards: Water" published in 2024 is now being used in a 50-hour professional development course, introduced in 2025. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Ohio University and a Master of Arts degree in emergency and disaster management from American Public University. His views expressed do not necessarily represent the official position of any of these organizations.

■ **What professional accomplishment or experience are you most proud of and/or learned the most from?**
In 2023, Mike embarked on a pro-bono advocacy effort for pediatric feeding during disasters (i.e., infants and toddlers), based on an inquiry from a disaster researcher to the Children and Disaster Caucus. This is a work in progress but some milestones have been met, which can be found in a free-to-read e-book, published in 2024.

■ **What are you hoping to get out of being a part of the IAEM leadership team?**
The opportunity to help shape the IAEM-USA and the overall field of professional emergency management through advocacy, inspiration, and analysis.

■ **How did you get your start in emergency management?**
9/11 – I was working in NYC (midtown) on that day. This is a much longer story than what will fit here. I have written a short version for LinkedIn, a longer version for Medium, and will have a much longer one in a free-to-read online book, out in 2025.

■ **What's your superpower?**
I can converse entirely in EM acronyms, being a SME PITA, myself.

Michael Prasad, CEM, IAEM-USA Region 2 president

■ **Tell us about one of your best experiences working in emergency management:**
Superstorm Sandy response and recovery work in New Jersey (2012-13). This was the first PRESDEC where all six Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) were implemented. I was part of the team which: 1) solidified the roles for national NGOs (NVOAD and the American Red Cross) for RSF roles, 2) helped FEMA revise its cost-share match protocol for donated resources, 3) created the first paid-staff state VOAD, in New Jersey and which is still in place today.

■ **Is there anything you read every morning?**
Emergency Management Intel-

Get to Know Your IAEM Leadership—Region 2

ligence – think of it as more than situational awareness reports. As a Red Cross leadership volunteer, I have a ton of daily reports available, but the one I open up every day is the overnight national shelter count, by state/territory.

■ **Is there any advice or knowledge you would like to share with emerging professionals in the field?**

Build a network of SMEs, peers, mentors, etc. and cultivate it constantly. Help others equitably, as you need help yourself. One aspect of professional emergency management which is very different from most other professions, is that generally we are 'in it' to help others, and not line our own pockets. And

if you think of the people you work on behalf of, as 'clients' rather than 'victims', it will change your own perspective on how you do that work, for everyone's benefit—including your own.

■ **Looking to the future, is there growth you would like to see in emergency management or IAEM?**

Two areas – both of which I will be personally working directly on – for growth at the IAEM (and effectively also in professional EM) is our partnerships with the American Red Cross and the U.S. state/territory/ sovereign tribal nation associations; both for increased membership in the IAEM and for collaborative work toward professional certification credentialing.

■ **What motto do you live by?**

Why have only one? I have three: Carpe Diem, Be Intrepid, and Be Kind. ◆

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Times of Change

IAEM's Advocacy Efforts

IAEM is actively working to ensure these transitions are structured and sustainable without compromising community safety by:

■ Engaging policymakers to slow implementation and assess long-term impacts.

■ Requesting IAEM representation on FEMA's Review Council.

■ Advocating for state and local solutions to address potential capability gaps.

What You Can Do

The IAEM Government Affairs Committee has identified a key list of potentially influential legislative members who may be able to urge the administration to slow down these changes. These can be found in the new IAEM Advocacy Resource Center.

For IAEM members in influential districts and states identified:

■ Conduct outreach, and provide information and resources to elected representatives for them to share with the White House. Draft an email to the "staff contact" for the listed leader asking them to contact the president. Use this letter template.

■ Before sending your email, use this template to create an individualized letter, then attach the Letter to the President template to your email. The ask is for your representative to send a letter to the President on this issue using the suggested template.

■ Help IAEM remain coordinated in this effort—please forward all responses to IAEMhelp@iaem.com.

For IAEM members who do not see their delegation represented in the key list of legislative members, we ask you to engage in the following way:

■ **Identify Programs at Risk in Your Community**: Assess federal grants and programs your community relies on.

■ **Engage Local and State Leaders and Lawmakers**: Advocate for local-, state-, or regionally-funded alternatives to maintain local resilience capabilities currently supported in part or wholly by federal grant programs.

■ **Continue to Share Your Story**: Take every opportunity possible to share the value your emergency management program adds to your community through as many channels as possible. Speak at community meetings, post on your agency's social media, or even ask to provide an update at your next town meeting.

■ **Share Success Stories**: Post on IAEM Connect and share your successes to fellow IAEM members.

Ongoing Resources and Assistance

IAEM recognizes that its members rely on the Association's resources most during times of crisis. IAEM will not abandon any emergency manager who cannot make a dues payment while dealing with an unexpected job change. In response to recent changes, IAEM is implementing five key measures to support affected emergency managers:

■ **Career Support**: IAEM's Online Career Center offers job seekers free resume postings and access to more than 120 job listings. Additionally, IAEM is waiving job posting fees for employers, allowing them to list openings at no cost. Employers can request a coupon code by emailing IAEMhelp@iaem.com.

■ **Complimentary Memberships**: Federal emergency management personnel who have been terminated due to cutbacks are eligible for a one-year complimentary IAEM membership. This provides access to professional resources and networking opportunities that may aid in securing future employment. Requests for this membership can be submitted to IAEMhelp@iaem.com.

■ **Extended Membership Grace Period**: Current IAEM members whose dues are up for renewal or cancellation will receive an additional 90-day grace period. This applies to memberships expiring by June 30, 2025.
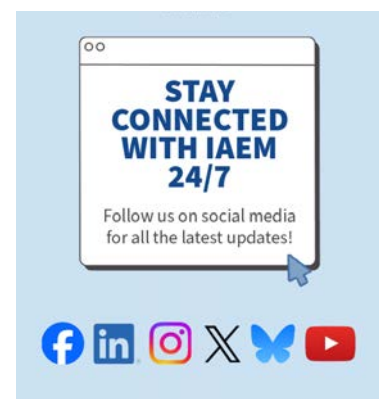
■ **Free Virtual Conference Access**: Laid-off federal emergency management personnel may attend the IAEM Plugged-In Virtual Conference on May 9 at no cost.

■ **Open Access to IAEM Bulletin**: Through the summer, IAEM's monthly Bulletin will be publicly available on the IAEM website, ensuring that all emergency managers can stay informed on industry developments.

IAEM remains committed to supporting emergency managers facing professional uncertainty. The Association appreciates the dedication of public servants and will continue to provide resources to help them navigate these challenges.

In a continued effort to provide the emergency management community the latest and most useful information, IAEM has created two new resource pages: the Member Resource page and the Advocacy Resource page. Each will be maintained by IAEM with the latest information pertaining to each topic.

For additional assistance, contact IAEM at IAEMhelp@iaem.com. ◆

STAY CONNECTED WITH IAEM 24/7

Follow us on social media for all the latest updates!

IAEM in Action

His Excellency, Khaled Abdullah Almansoori, IAEM Middle East President, met with Brigadier General Ahmed Almansoori on January 22, 2025, in the United Arab Emirates.

IAEM-USA past presidents, Judd Freed, CEM, and Nick Crossley, CEM, spoke on Jan. 28 with Pamela Williams, the acting assistant administrator, Grant Programs Directorate, FEMA, at the NACo Intergovernmental Disaster Reform Task Force. IAEM looks forward to participating in the reform process at FEMA to strengthen our emergency management system.

Valerie Lucus-McEwen, CEM,CBCP, president IAEM-USA Region 8 and Jim McEwen, lifelong emergency management enthusiast represented IAEM during the 2025 Colorado Emergency Management Association Annual Conference in Loveland, Colorado on Feb. 11.

View the photos of the 2024 IAEM Annual Conference

IAEM News to Know

Certification

■ **Certification Updates**: We encourage you to take a moment to familiarize yourself with these certification updates:

● All documentation uploaded into your certification application must be in a **PDF format**. Check your files before submitting your application.

● **Comprehensive Emergency Management**: definition has been updated to "Comprehensive disaster/emergency management refers to experience, assigned duties, and/or other responsibilities across multiple phases of disaster /emergency management."

● **Legislative Contact**: Now includes in-person meetings.

● **Special Recognition**: Now includes LinkedIn "Top Voice."

● **Letterhead Change**: Reference letters are no longer required to be provided on letterhead, but they must include a valid signature.

● **AV language**: Now includes other A/V products including, but not limited to, podcasts, mobile applications, and blog/vlogs. Applicants are required to follow the metrics table provided and include all required documentation to receive credit for this contribution.

The Applicant Guidebook includes details about the application requirements. Don't hesitate to reach out with questions to certificationinfo@iaem.com. ◆

Conference News

■ More IAEM Speaking Opportunities Opening Soon:

● The Poster Showcase Call for Speakers opens on **Monday, March 10** and closes on **Friday, April 11, 2025**.

● The EMvision Talks® Call for Speakers opens on **Monday, April 7** and closes on **Friday, May 9, 2025**.

● Find out more information on our conference website under the speaker pages. ◆
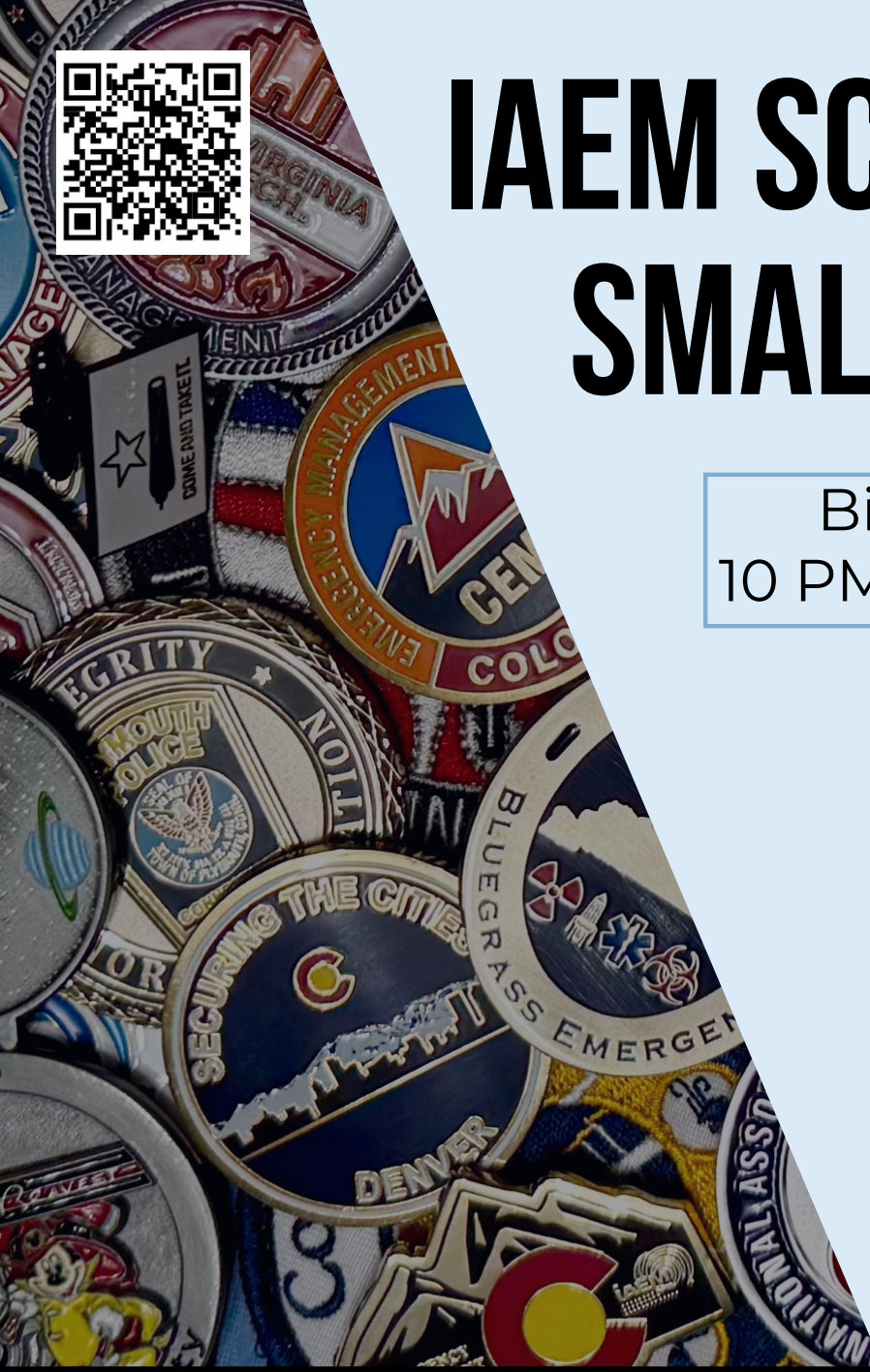
IAEM PLUGGED IN
Virtual Conference
May 9, 2025

REGISTRATION RATES

FREE – IAEM Student Member
$49 – IAEM Emerging Professional Member
$99 – IAEM Individual and Affiliate Member
$149 – Non-Member

IAEM SCHOLARSHIP SMALLS AUCTION

Bidding closes at
10 PM EST, Feb. 28, 2025

SCHOLARSHIP CHALLENGE COIN SALE

PRICE: $30 + $5 SHIPPING & HANDLING

General Focus Articles:

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. Appropriate topics include: new research results, unique applications, successful programs, real experiences with disasters and/or exercises, reviews of new publications, and viewpoints on important issues facing emergency management. Refer to the Author Guidelines for tips and techniques for successfully submitting your article for publication.

• **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.

Access and Functional Needs Case Law Considerations for Emergency Management—Part Two

By Ian Thigpen, Emergency Manager, Klamath County, Oregon

Many court cases address preparedness failures. This article will look at these cases more directly than the previous article (Thigpen, Access and Functional Needs Case Law Considerations for Emergency Managers, Dec. 2024 IAEM Bulletin). The principles of reasonable accommodation, substantial change, and prohibition of civil rights suspension continue to be central to these cases (Thigpen, Overview of Access and Functional Needs for Emergency Managers, 2024).

Shirey ex rel. Kyger v. City of Alexandria Sch. Bd., 229 F.3d 1143, 2000 WL 1198054 (4th Cir. 2000)

In 1996, GW Middle School (Alexandria, Virginia) had a bomb threat where two children with disabilities were abandoned for 90 minutes in the school library. The parents of one of the children filed an Office of Civil Rights (OCR) complaint, which led to an evacuation plan agreement with the school. However, in 1998, the child was abandoned again for two minutes during an unscheduled fire alarm, where the designated responsible adult received permission from the administration to leave. While an administrator was en route to the child, another teacher found the child and assumed the responsible adult role. The child's parents filed a lawsuit against the school board for failing to meet the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and Rehabilitation Act (RA) compliance for both the 1996 and 1998 events.

The first question of this case was, 'Does the OCR Complaint Agreement nullify discrimination claims under ADA or RA?' The court found that the agreement to resolve the OCR complaint does not substantiate a waving of the right to file a disability claim under the ADA or RA. The agreement did not state a waving of the right, nor would the court have recognized a statement in the agreement if it existed, as disability rights under the ADA and RA are civil rights.

The second question of the case is, 'Was the child excluded from a benefit or program due to disability discrimination?' The benefit/program is 'safe evacuation from school buildings during an emergency.' The court found that the 1996 case would have constituted a disability rights violation, however, the recommendation would have been an order to develop an evacuation plan—which was developed in response to the OCR complaint. Therefore, there was no court-ordered resolution for the 1996 event. Regarding the 1998 event, the court found that minor deviations from an emergency plan are insufficient to constitute discrimination. Therefore, the court found in favor of the defendant, City of Alexandria School Board, on all counts.

Civil rights cannot be waived by signed consent or agreement. Further, a deliberately developed emergency plan that aims to identify and meet known access and functional needs does not need to be rigidly adhered to if the plan is well known by all stakeholders and minor deviations are aimed at meeting the intents of the plan under unexpected circumstances.

Savage v. City Place Ltd. Partnership, No. 240306, 2004 WL 3045404 (Md. Cir. Ct. Dec. 20, 2004)

The resolution of a legal case against a Marshalls store in Maryland mandated the store to develop accessible evacuation plans as part of its responsibilities under Title III of the ADA. The lawsuit was filed by a person who uses a wheelchair and had been instructed to evacuate the store during a fire alarm but found no accessible exits. After negotiations, Marshalls agreed to implement accessible evacuation routes for shoppers with disabilities in all its stores (Weibgen, 2015).

Accessibility is not just for getting into buildings under normal conditions but also for escaping during power shut-off. Often, these require plans to employ staff, or potentially bystanders, to assist wheelchair users or other people with disabilities with escaping floors above the ground level or other confining locations. Resourcing these plans may include stair chairs or other non-electrically dependent lifting/descending devices. Building design and capital improvement plans should consist of non-electrically dependent evacuation egress for people with disabilities. This is applicable to both government and commercial facilities.

AFN Case Law Considerations

California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC) et al. v. City of Oakland, et al. Case No. C07-04608 EDL (2010)

CFILC won a lawsuit against the City of Oakland regarding failures to integrate the needs of people with disabilities into their emergency plans. Oakland has developed a Functional Needs Annex to the Mass Care plan to achieve court-ordered compliance, featuring 20 accessible emergency shelters for people with mobility disabilities. Each shelter will have a designated Shelter Functional Needs Coordinator to assist persons with disabilities and ensure their safety and comfort. The city's emergency notification system is designed to be inclusive, interfacing with various electronic and wireless devices to provide information during emergencies. A Geographic Information System (GIS) has been created to assist city first responders in identifying the location of individuals requiring accessible transportation services (DRA, 2010).

All plans should include AFN considerations. However, not all emergency plans address actions for the public. Suppose a plan is public-facing (e.g., mass care, health and medical). In that case, people with disabilities must be included in the planning process. This may be difficult as key partners (e.g., Centers for Independent Living) are often not funded to participate in these activities. There can be a learning curve for people with disabilities regarding how emergency planning is conducted. Frequently, words mean different things to someone with a disability in comparison to emergency management (e.g., "capability"). Consider provid-ing ICS-100 and ICS-700 for frequent planning partners. Live (accessible) instruction is best.

Communities Actively Living Independent and Free v. City of Los Angeles 2:09-cv-00287 (2011)

This was a seminal class action case by 500,000 people with disabilities regarding Los Angeles city and county emergency planning for people with disabilities. The case did not follow a disaster event but rather was a concerted effort coordinated by the Center for Independent Living after reviewing city and county plans, and not having sufficient representation from people with disabilities during the planning process. Highlighted takeaways include:

- Personal planning by people with disabilities does not reduce the city's obligation to account for people with disabilities.
- That delegation of operational responsibility for people with disabilities to subordinate agencies/departments or NGOs does not absolve the city's overall responsibility for disability-specific planning, preparedness, or response.
- That act of delegation is meaningless if those entities also do not specifically address people with disabilities in their plans, preparations, or responses.
- That ad hoc ability to receive and manage AFN/accommodation requests alone is not compliant with ADA and the Rehabilitation Act.
- The city's expectation that people with disabilities should prepare themselves to receive the same services that are designed for people without disabilities fails to meet the meaningful access standard.

"[T]he court enumerated nine essential components that effective emergency preparedness plans must include. Among them are the development of a comprehensive plan, assessment of the efficacy of that plan, advance identification of needs and resources, provision of evacuation assistance and transportation, shelter and care for those forced to evacuate their homes, and post-disaster recovery assistance" (Weibgen, 2015).

Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled v. City of New York 11-CV-6690-JMF (2013)

Hurricane Sandy struck amid the development of BCIDs federal class action case against the City of New York for failures to prepare for people with disabilities. The event significantly amplified the scope and evidence BICD intended to bring. Failure to rapidly canvass the affected community left people with disabilities without power, food, water, and sanitary conditions, living in high-rise conditions for more than two weeks. Many people with disabilities died, and many were saved by grassroots volunteers unaffiliated with the official response effort.

In September 2011, a federal class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of 900,000 New Yorkers with disabilities regarding the city's failure to plan for their needs during disasters like Hurricane Sandy. In November 2013, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The U.S. Department of Justice also supported the plaintiffs' position. The case went to trial in March 2013, and on Sept. 30, 2014, a comprehensive settlement agreement was reached. The court approved the settlement on March 6, 2015, recognizing its significance in making New York City safer for people with disabilities. The settlement resulted in more

AFN Case Law Considerations

detailed policies and procedures to address the unique needs of people with disabilities in large-scale disasters (DRA, 2015).

The rapid canvasing of disaster-affected areas and the processing of survivors into case management at the earliest possible time is essential to meeting AFNs. Case management intake is often done along with deliberate disaster assessments – frequently many days or weeks after impact. Further, the typical approach to mass care and individual assistance is 'First Come, First Served.' Yet, AFN populations are often the last to be informed and the last to be able to get in line. An equitable approach implies systemizing and planning for the execution of canvasing with the intent to start the case management and disaster assessment process and front-loading the most vulnerable populations wherever possible. This is done to ensure equal access and opportunity.

This is also an opportunity to combine case management intake data and individual assistance data into one database. This improves data quality and delivery of accessible services.

DC Center for Independent Living et al v. District of Columbia et al 1:22-CV-03541 (2019)

On Sept. 9, 2014, DRA filed a class action lawsuit together with co-counsel from Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP and the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs against the District of Columbia for its failure to meaningfully include persons with disabilities in its emergency planning. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the

United Spinal Association, the DC Center for Independent Living, and three individuals representing persons with disabilities. In December 2014, the parties began negotiating a settlement. On May 2, 2019, a monumental settlement agreement was reached that will significantly improve the District's emergency preparedness and response programs for thousands of people with disabilities.

"Under the historic settlement, the District has agreed to a comprehensive three-year plan that includes: (1) creating a Disability Community Advisory Group that will provide disability-specific recommendations for emergency plans and training, (2) ensuring that emergency-related public communications are disseminated in accessible formats, (3) considering physical accessibility as a priority when opening emergency shelters, (4) creating a Post-Emergency Canvassing Operation plan, (5) ensuring that transportation resources are sufficient to meet the potential demand for accessible transportation during emergencies, and (6) creating and implementing a work plan to improve procedures for evacuating people with disabilities from high-rise buildings" (DRA, 2019).

Conclusions

There is substantial case law evidence to promote the critical need to ensure AFNs are identified, planned for, equipped, and trained for during preparedness. From schools to department stores, to cities and counties; the emergency preparedness program needs to include and serve people with disabilities with meaningful access and equal opportunity. This begs the question, with limited resources how to we move preparedness programs forward? Do we focus on ensuring accessibility for existing

programs, or do we increase our capabilities and expand our programs to address response gaps that are poorly or not addressed at all? The answer is reasonable accommodation to existing programs will always hold priority over program expansion; yet substantial change to an existing program is not required to maximize services to meet AFNs. ◆

Disclaimer

I am not an attorney of law. Do not use this information as legal advice. Speak with your legal counsel regarding your agency's specific legal considerations.

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Integrating GIS and FEMA for Sustainable Recovery Post-Hurricane Milton

Ahmed Gharib Ibrahim Megahed, Geographic Information Systems Consultant

Hurricane Milton, which struck the Gulf Coast as a Category 5 storm, underscored the urgent need for effective long-term disaster recovery strategies. The compounded effects of climate change on hurricane frequency and severity necessitate a reevaluation of recovery frameworks. This article explores FEMA's utilization of GIS in post-disaster recovery efforts following Hurricane Milton, focusing on how geospatial data informed infrastructure planning and community resilience initiatives. Furthermore, the significant role of FEMA in promoting equitable recovery efforts and federal funding will be discussed.

The Aftermath of Hurricane Milton

Hurricane Milton resulted in catastrophic damage, with an estimated $18 billion in losses and tens of thousands displaced. The storm's impact was intensified by pre-existing vulnerabilities in local infrastructure, raising critical questions about future preparedness and resilience. The recovery process required a strategic approach to rebuilding that prioritized climate adaptation.

Utilizing GIS for Long-Term Recovery and Resilience

FEMA's recovery strategy post-Milton leveraged GIS to assess damage, identify vulnerabilities, and inform rebuilding efforts. GIS provided critical insights into flood risk zones, guiding decisions on where to prioritize reconstruction efforts. The data-driven approach facilitated the design of resilient infrastructure that could withstand future storms, ensuring safer communities.

FEMA's Collaborative Approach to Resilience Planning

FEMA's recovery initiatives were characterized by extensive collaboration with local governments and community organizations. GIS was pivotal in these partnerships, enabling data sharing and informed decision-making. Vice President Kamala Harris was instrumental in advocating for federal support and funding for recovery efforts after Hurricane Milton. She emphasized the importance of equitable rebuilding strategies, ensuring that federal resources were allocated to the most affected communities. Her leadership helped mobilize additional funding for disaster relief and infrastructure improvement, which were crucial for long-term recovery. By promoting the integration of community input into recovery planning, Vice President Harris highlighted the necessity of building resilience in vulnerable populations, ensuring that recovery efforts prioritized those most in need.

FEMA emphasizes a community-centered strategy that engages various stakeholders to enhance preparedness and response efforts. This approach involves several key components:

■ **Community Engagement**: FEMA prioritizes working with local governments, businesses, non-profits, and residents to gather input and build trust. This collaboration ensures that plans are tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of each community.

■ **Data-Driven Decision Making**: Utilizing data from past hurricanes, including Hurricane Milton, FEMA analyzes impacts to improve future planning. This includes understanding the socio-economic factors that influence a community's resilience.

■ **Integrated Planning**: FEMA promotes integrating resilience strategies into broader planning frameworks, including land use, infrastructure, and economic development. This holistic approach ensures that resilience is a priority across all sectors.

■ **Training and Resources**: Providing training sessions and resources to local officials and community leaders helps build capacity. This can include workshops on emergency response, recovery planning, and mitigation strategies.

■ **Partnerships**: Collaborating with other federal agencies, state governments, and private sector organizations allows for resource sharing and enhances the overall effectiveness of resilience efforts.

■ **Public Awareness Campaigns**: Educating the public on preparedness measures, evacuation routes, and available resources help communities respond more effectively during disasters.

Addressing Disparities in Post-Disaster Recovery

A significant challenge in the recovery process was ensuring equitable access to resources for all communities, particularly low-income populations disproportionately

Integrating GIS and FEMA

affected by the storm. GIS data was utilized to identify socio-economic vulnerabilities, allowing FEMA to allocate resources more effectively and address disparities in recovery. By incorporating community input and leveraging GIS insights, FEMA aimed to foster inclusive recovery efforts that prioritized long-term resilience.

Proposed Solutions for Long-Term Recovery

To enhance long-term recovery from Hurricane Milton and similar disasters, several solutions can be implemented:

■ **Enhanced GIS Infrastructure**: Investment in advanced GIS technologies and training for local emergency management teams can improve data collection and analysis capabilities. This would enable quicker assessments of damage and needs, facilitating a more agile recovery process.

■ **Community-Based Resilience Plans**: Developing localized resilience plans that involve community stakeholders can ensure that recovery strategies are tailored to the unique needs of each community. Engaging residents in planning processes can promote ownership and investment in recovery efforts.

■ **Equitable Resource Distribution**: Establishing clear guidelines for equitable resource allocation can ensure that the most vulnerable populations receive the support they need. This may involve prioritizing funding for infrastructure improvements in historically marginalized communities.

■ **Sustainable Infrastructure Investments**: Incorporating climate-resilient design into rebuilding efforts can reduce future risks. This includes using materials and designs that can withstand extreme weather events, as well as implementing green infrastructure solutions, such as wetlands restoration and urban green spaces.

■ **Federal and State Collaboration**: Strengthening collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies can streamline recovery efforts. This includes coordinating funding and resources to eliminate bureaucratic delays and ensure that support reaches communities quickly.

■ **Public Education and Awareness**: Promoting public education initiatives on disaster preparedness and response can empower communities to take proactive measures. By increasing awareness of risks and available resources, residents can be better prepared for future disasters.

Conclusion

Hurricane Milton highlighted the critical role of GIS in guiding FEMA's long-term recovery strategies. The integration of geospatial data enabled effective planning and decision-making, fostering resilience in infrastructure and communities. The advocacy of Vice President Kamala Harris was pivotal in ensuring that recovery efforts were equitable and well-supported at the federal level. As climate change presents ongoing challenges, the collaboration between GIS technologies, FEMA's recovery initiatives, and strong leadership from federal officials sets a framework for sustainable rebuilding practices capable of withstanding future disasters. ◆

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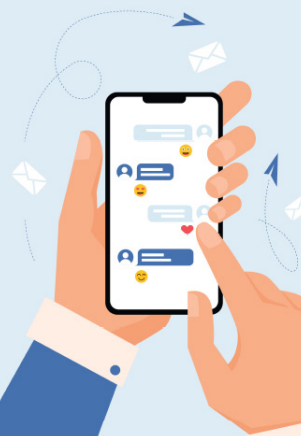
Recalibrating Active Assailant Response: Human-Centered, Prevention-Focused Emergency Management

By Kevin Robins, Emergency Management Program Specialist, Spokane Colleges Office of Campus Security

In recent years, emergency management practitioners have increasingly emphasized advanced technologies—particularly AI-enabled devices like smart cameras and gunshot detection systems—in their efforts to enhance security and prevent incidents such as active assailant situations. This shift often comes at the expense of a more comprehensive approach that balances human factors, physical security measures, and traditional technologies. While innovative tools offer promising capabilities, an overreliance on them can lead to significant oversights in emergency preparedness and response.

In addressing the challenge of preventing violence in schools and communities, a shift in strategy is crucial. Research in active shooter psychology, such as the findings by Mary Ellen O'Toole and others, underscores the importance of understanding behavioral precursors to violence. O'Toole's work highlights the necessity of proactive interventions and a nuanced approach to understanding individuals' motivations and behaviors, which is essential for effective prevention strategies (O'Toole, 2000).

The Pitfall of "Magpie Syndrome" in School Safety

The rapid advancement and allure of advanced technology as a "silver bullet" solution often distracts from more holistic and effective approaches. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as "magpie syndrome," describes the tendency to prioritize shiny, new tech over foundational strategies. Sales rep-resentatives frequently tout these products as comprehensive solutions to complex security challenges. However, such claims can be overstated, leading to a misplaced confidence in technology's ability to address issues like active assailant situations. This phenomenon, known as "technological solutionism," assumes that the latest innovations can serve as a panacea for security concerns, which is often not the case. While AI-enabled cameras, gunshot detection systems, and other innovations can enhance security, an overreliance on these tools creates a false sense of security. Moreover, they may divert resources from essential programs that address the root causes of violence.

Overreliance on technology can result in several pitfalls:

■ **False Sense of Security**: Believing that technology alone can prevent incidents may lead to complacency in other critical areas of emergency management.

■ **Resource Allocation**: Significant investments in unproven technologies can divert funds from essential human-centered initiatives, such as training and community engagement.

■ **System Vulnerabilities**: Technological systems are susceptible to failures, cyber-attacks, and other issues that can render them ineffective during critical moments.

To counter this, emergency management practitioners must recalibrate their strategies to integrate smart technology with human-centered approaches. This means embracing technology not as a standalone solution but as one component of a broader prevention framework. Research supports that when paired with robust behavioral threat assessment and intervention programs, technology can complement rather than overshadow human expertise (Cornell et al., 2018).

Proactive Risk Assessment and Community Engagement

Central to this rebalancing act is the development and maintenance of proactive risk assessment programs, supported by behavioral intervention teams. These teams rely on a community-based approach that fosters awareness, buy-in, and collaboration among educators, parents, students, and local stakeholders. Such programs have demonstrated success in identifying and mitigating risks before they escalate into violence (Fein et al., 2004).

The Imperative of Human-Centered Approaches

Focusing predominantly on technological solutions overlooks the crucial role of human factors in emergency management. Preventative measures that emphasize understanding and addressing the root causes of violent behaviors are essential. Research indicates that interventions focusing on behavioral science theories can effectively reduce instances of violence.

Key components of a human-centered approach include:

■ **Behavioral Threat Assessment**: Identifying and intervening with individuals who exhibit warning signs of potential violence. This

Prevention-Focused Emergency Management

proactive strategy has been effective in preventing incidents before they occur.

■ **Comprehensive Training**: Equipping personnel with the skills to recognize and respond to potential threats, fostering a culture of vigilance and preparedness.

■ **Community Engagement**: Building strong relationships within the community to encourage the reporting of suspicious activities and support for preventative initiatives.

While technology can enhance emergency management efforts, it should complement—not replace—human-centered strategies. A balanced approach ensures that technological tools are integrated into a broader framework that includes personnel training, physical security measures, and community involvement.

To achieve this balance, emergency management practitioners should:

■ **Critically Evaluate Technological Solutions**: Assess the capabilities and limitations of new technologies to ensure they meet the specific needs of their organizations.

■ **Invest in Human Resources**: Allocate resources to training and development programs that enhance the skills and preparedness of personnel.

■ **Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration**: Engage experts from various fields, including behavioral sciences, to develop comprehensive strategies that address both technological and human factors.

Embracing Human-Centered Emergency Management Strategies

Active engagement in proactive risk assessments, behavioral intervention teams, and mental health resources are indispensable components of a holistic approach (Cornell et al., 2018). Additionally, readily available mental health resources must be a cornerstone of any prevention strategy. Studies have shown that comprehensive mental health services, when integrated into schools, significantly reduce instances of violence while improving overall student well-being (Nickerson et al., 2019).

Addressing Discipline and Building Respectful Learning Environments

Another critical element is addressing the erosion of discipline in schools. Unaddressed classroom disruptions and policy violations have a cumulative effect, leading to a breakdown in authority and escalating behavioral issues. Each unaddressed classroom disruption or violation of policy serves as a building block for more significant behavioral issues, eroding respect for authority and the foundational values of civics. Establishing and enforcing behavioral codes rooted in respect for authority and social morals is essential for creating a positive learning environment. Discipline should not be punitive for its own sake but should compassionately reinforce behavioral expectations that align with societal and moral norms. Research shows that clear, consistently enforced behavioral codes contribute to improved student outcomes and a safer school climate. Each incident addressed reinforces a culture of accountability and respect, which research shows is directly linked to improved educational outcomes and

decreased violence (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

Inculcating a Prevention-Driven Approach

A prevention-driven approach to school safety is not only compassionate but also cost-effective and intellectually sound. By focusing on behavioral precursors to violence, schools can create a culture of awareness and intervention. Community buy-in and the availability of mental health services are critical to this effort. Studies indicate that schools with integrated mental health resources see fewer instances of violence and improved student well-being (Nickerson et al., 2019).

This strategy prioritizes understanding and addressing the underlying causes of violent behavior, rather than focusing solely on reactive measures. By fostering a culture of respect, accountability, and proactive engagement, schools can create environments that are not only safer but also more conducive to learning.

Additionally, fostering respect for authority and behavioral norms in the classroom directly supports the primary mission of schools: teaching and learning. A disciplined, secure environment enhances both academic achievement and social development.

Conclusion

My professional experience and exposure to numerous operational environments and strategies have underscored a vital pattern—individuals who commit such acts are invariably in a heightened psychological crisis. Moreover, they often project their mental state and intent to resolve it through observable behaviors or communications. Balancing the

Trends in Hazard Mitigation in Local Government Emergency Management

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Scholarly and practitioner literature has documented that since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a steady increase in natural disasters related to climate change and that the recovery costs (in dollars) for these natural disasters are also sharply increasing and straining the financial resources at all levels of government. Since 2000, the cost of flood damage from meteorological events has roughly doubled every decade (Flavelle, 2024). For comparison, "the federal government issued two disaster declarations for floods in 2000," and in 2024, it issued 66 disaster declarations for floods (Flavelle, 2024). Hazard mitigation and climate adaptation policies in public management and emergency management at all levels of government are becoming an ever-present topic of discussion.

This article will examine whether there is a correlation between the increase in climate-related natural disasters and local government emergency management programs prioritizing hazard mitigation. To answer this question, the analytical objectives of this article include:

■ **Objective 1**: Comparative analysis of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs and total federal cost share of funding for mitigation projects from Fiscal Years 2000-2024.

■ **Objective 2**: Trend analysis of FEMA HMA programs grant funding awards from Fiscal Years 2019-2022.

Background

The research indicates an alarming upward trend, a sharp increase in extreme-whether and climate-related billion-dollar natural disasters of increasing magnitude and frequency, and higher economic costs from 2010-2019. According to Smith, "After adjusting for inflation, the U.S. experienced more than twice the number of billion-dollar disasters during the 2010s than in the 2000s decade: 119 versus 59 (2020). In terms of economic losses from damage, the 119 billion-dollar natural disasters impacting U.S. communities in the 2010s had estimated associated costs totaling $802 billion (Consumer Price Index-adjusted as of January 2020) with an average cost per year of $80.2 billion (Smith, 2020). In contrast, the decade of the 2000s had 59 billion-dollar natural disasters with estimated associated CPI-adjusted costs totaling $510.3 billion with an average cost per year of $51.0 billion (Smith, 2020). To put the sharp increase in billion-dollar natural disasters in the 2010s into a comparative context, there were 52 billion-dollar natural disasters in the 1990s with associated costs that are CPI-adjusted, totaling $269.6 billion with an average cost per year of $27.0 billion (Smith, 2020). The upward trend in more frequent billion-dollar natural disasters and spiking economic losses from damag-

HMA Grant Program	FY2019 Funding Awarded	FY2020 Funding Awarded	FY2021 Funding Awarded	FY2022 Funding Awarded
Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)	$699.3M	$597.1M	$1.1B	$764.48M
Public Assistance Mitigation Program (PA Mitigation)	$305.4M	$432.0M	$836M	$601M
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)	$0	$0	$0	$79.06M
Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM)	$87.8M	$178.1M	$180.1M	$170.87M
Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Post Fire (HMGP Post Fire)	$7.4M	$0	$14.1M	$19.97M
Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Program (FMA)	$71.4M	$107.9M	$210.5M	$148.35M
Total	$1.10B	$1.31B	$2.34B	$1.78B

Table 1: FEMA HMA Grant Programs: Fiscal Year Funding Awards 2019-2022¹

es have continued into the first four years of the 2020 decade.

Findings

The analysis primarily examines data released by FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Division. FEMA administers six distinct HMA grant programs. The six HMA grant programs are listed in Table 1.

FEMA HMA program data reveals the federal government's share of funding for implementing hazard mitigation projects in state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) jurisdictions steadily increased over the last 24 years from FY2000-FY2024.

Moreover, when comparing fiscal years, Figure 1 represents the federal share of mitigation project costs for SLTT governments progressively increasing over 24 years.

A trend analysis of FEMA's HMA

Trends in Hazard Mitigation

grant programs was conducted using available funding awards data for five of the six HMA grant programs. An analysis was not done for the new BRIC grant program because the program was implemented in FY2022, and only one fiscal year of data is available.

Figure 2 presents the findings of the trend analysis of HMGP funding awards distributed by FEMA from FY2019-FY2022 and shows a gradual increase in funding over time.

The HMGP Post Fire funding awards analysis in Figure 3 indicates a steep increase in program funding from FY2019 to FY2022. The HMGP Post Fire program funding trend aligns with increased drought conditions and wildfire disasters over the past six years, located particularly in the western U.S.

The analysis of the PA Mitigation Program FY2019-FY2022 funding awards in Figure 4 indicates a sharp spike in program funding between FY2020 and FY2021.

The PDM program FY2019-FY2022 funding awards analysis in Figure 5 indicates a gradual increase in program funding between FY2019 and FY2020, followed by leveling off of award funding from FY2021 to FY2022.

The FMA program FY2019-FY2022 funding awards analysis in Figure 6 indicates a dramatic increase in program funding awards between FY2020 and FY2022, a funding trend that aligns with the high-impact flooding events in the last decade.
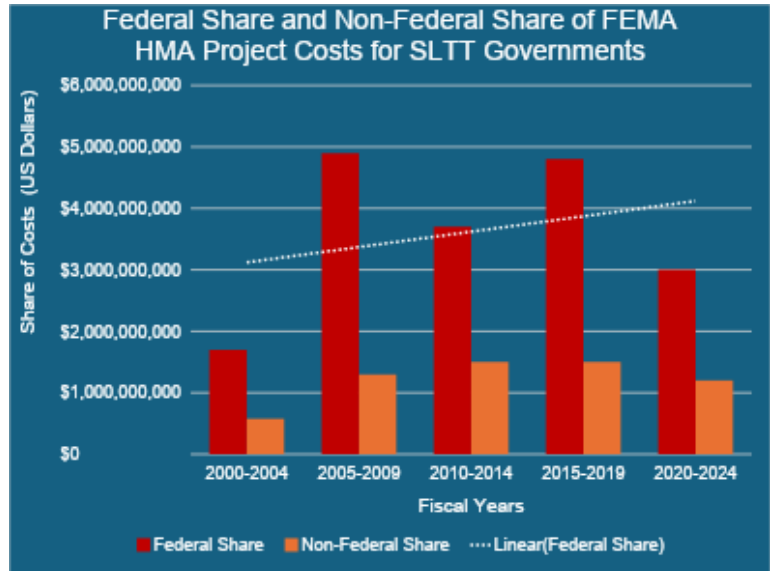

Figure 1: Federal Share and Non-Federal Share of FEMA HMA Project Costs for SLTT Governments[2]
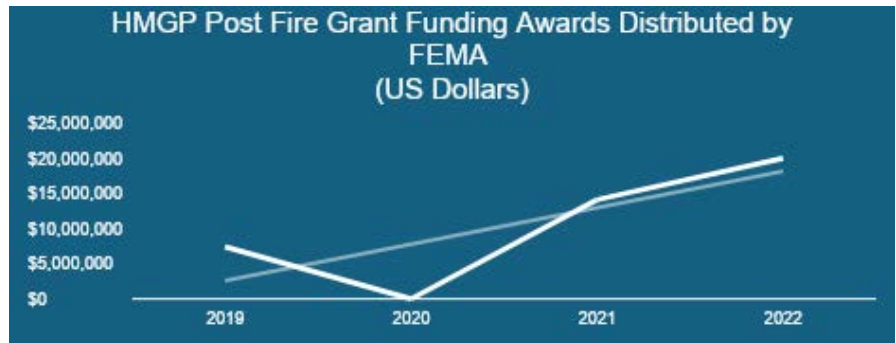

Figure 3: HMGP Post Fire Grant Funding Awards Distributed By FEMA (FY19-FY22)
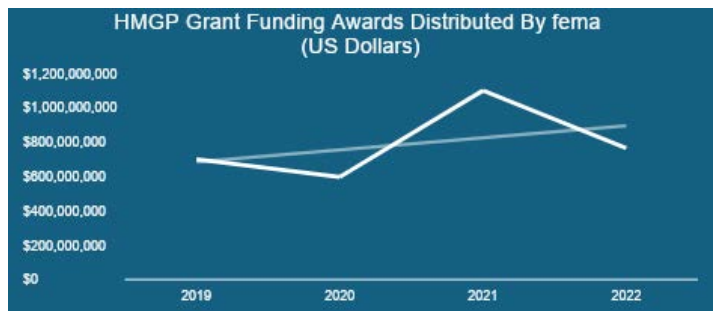

Figure 2: HMGP Grant Funding Awards Distributed By FEMA (FY19-FY22)[3]
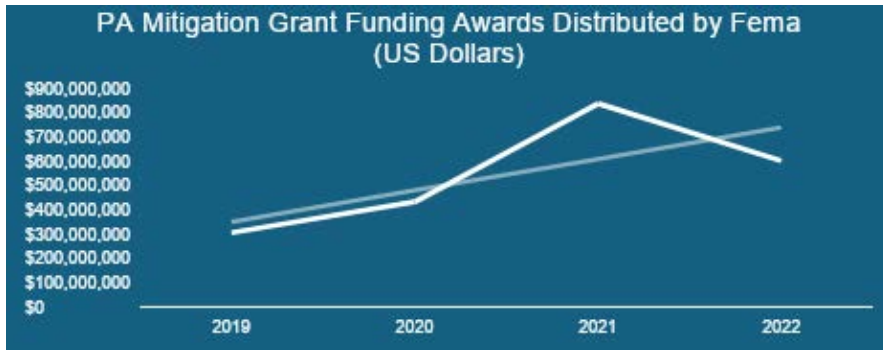
Trends in Hazard Mitigation

Figure 4: PA Mitigation Grant Funding Awards Distributed By FEMA (FY19-FY22).
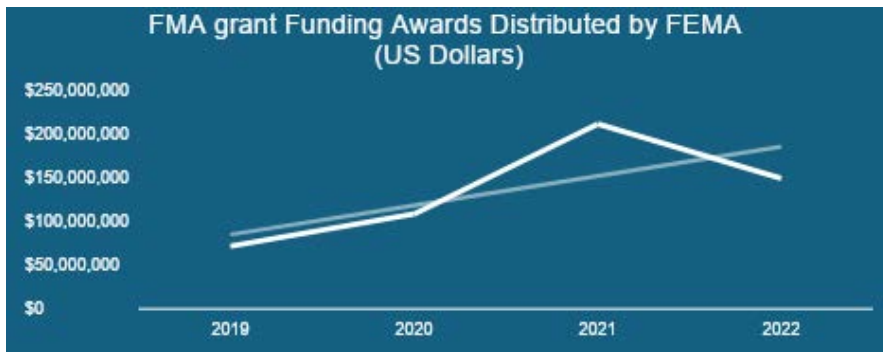

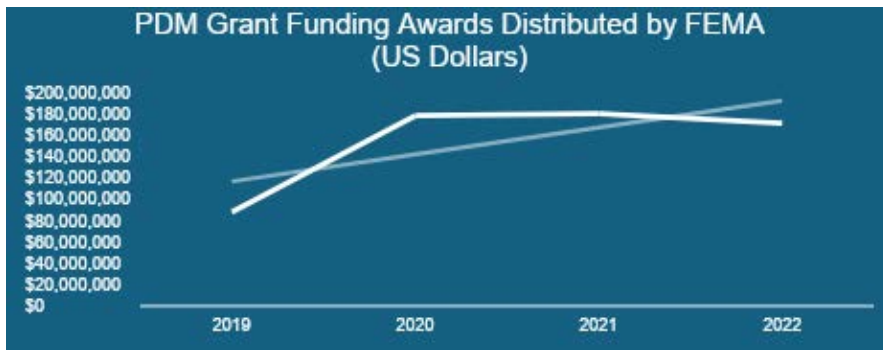*Figure 6: FMA Grant Funding Awards Distributed By FEMA (FY19-FY22)*

Figure 5: PDM Grant Funding Awards Distributed By FEMA (FY19-FY22)

Discussion

The evidence points to the federal and SLTT governments progressively directing substantial resources to hazard mitigation measures and implementing structural and non-structural mitigation projects, with the uptick in efforts appearing in the early 2010s and this trend continuing into the 2020s. Moreover, the federal government began prioritizing policies encouraging SLTT jurisdictions to direct emergency management efforts toward mitigation planning with the passage of the Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000. The DMA included new requirements that SLTT localities develop FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plans (HMPs) to be eligible for certain FEMA-administered emergency management and post-disaster grant awards, including eligibility for HMA program grants.

Despite the significant progress many SLTT jurisdictions have made proactively prioritizing hazard mitigation, local governments must contend with significant public management challenges associated with implementing mitigation measures, irrespective of whether the measures are structural or non-structural. Local public management challenges include the public's "incomplete understanding of the complexity of the problem [of climate change]" and the need to implement structural and non-structural hazard mitigation measures that may be unpopular or misunderstood by local residents (Gall et al., 2011). Additionally, local government officials and decision-makers may not recognize the importance of issues such as adapting building codes to mitigate climate change or the purpose and benefits of comprehensive hazard mitigation planning. Notably, despite the public management challenges, local gov-

Trends in Hazard Mitigation

ernments are best suited to decrease community risk to natural hazards and climate change and implement mitigation measures because local governments can control growth and development through land use regulations, building codes, acquisition, and other planning and public management methods. (Sandler & Schwab, 2022).

Conclusion

The findings in this article strongly indicate a correlation between the increase in natural disasters in the last two decades exacerbated by climate change and local governments prioritizing hazard mitigation, including engaging in mitigation planning and implementing structural and non-structural mitigation projects. As of 2017, 29.1 percent of the population lived in cities along the east and west coasts of the U.S., which are vulnerable to climate-related natu-

ral disasters, and the demographic trend of population growth in coastal counties continues into the present day (Sandler & Schwab, 2022). The notion that the U.S. population continues to grow in hazardous areas and climate change impacts the frequency and magnitude of natural disasters has made the mitigation phase in emergency management increasingly important, and mitigation policy discussions and activities in federal and SLTT emergency management programs more relevant than in previous decades. In the last two decades, significant progress has been made by federal and SLTT governments to respond to disasters proactively by engaging in mitigation efforts prior to catastrophes. The essential ingredient that determines whether local governments prioritize hazard mitigation and have the capacity to engage in varying types of mitigation measures is the availability of the political willpower necessary to do so. ◆

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Prevention-Focused Emergency Management

adoption of smart technology with evidence-based, human-centered approaches is essential for addressing the multifaceted challenge of school violence. By integrating the research-driven insights of experts like Mary Ellen O'Toole, rethinking resource allocation, and prioritizing prevention, we can shift the paradigm from reactive to proactive strategies. This holistic approach not only mitigates risks but also fosters a supportive, respectful, and thriving

educational environment for all community members. ◆

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Why You Should Consider a Veteran for an Emergency Management Position

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The emergency management profession continues to evolve with additional roles, responsibilities, and functions. This evolution includes more emergency management positions in various public and private sectors. It wasn't that long ago that emergency management agencies, and positions, were solely located at the federal, state, and county levels. Over the past couple of decades, emergency management offices and staff are functioning at medium-to-large universities, and more recently, within healthcare environments. Large corporations are now seeing the benefits of having emergency management professionals, and K-12 schools, at least at the district level, have become the latest sector to establish emergency managers in their organizations.

Dragoo and Jacobs (2023) pointed out in their recent EMAP article, "Since the early days of Civil Defense, our profession has steadily shifted and grown. Many of the steps along the way were small, others were huge. Some of the notable shifts being the creation of FEMA in 1979 and the shifting of FEMA into the DHS in 2003. It is through these changes that emergency management became a profession and an industry with its own identity."

A growing profession requires talented staff. Many police officers, firefighters, and public health officials have the transferable skills to fill some of these positions. Several institutions of higher education now offer emergency management degrees, although most graduate without a sufficient amount of experience for anything beyond entry-level positions.

To fulfill the growing need for professional emergency managers, perhaps retired or prior-service veterans would be a good fit. Hiring officials, and people who are in need of emergency managers, without a military background may not know what a veteran could bring to the team. U.S. Veterans Magazine, although not emergency management specific, lists some skills in their "Five Skills Veterans Bring to Your Business and Why You Should Hire Them" in their December 2023 issue.

■ Exceptional Leadership Skills.
■ Strong Work Ethic and Quick Learners.
■ Problem-Solving Abilities.
■ Team First Mentality.
■ Resilience & Adaptability.

Thinking about some specific skills a veteran may bring to the emergency management profession, the military provides direct, transferrable skill sets and experiences that may often be overlooked during the recruiting and hiring process for emergency managers.

First, the application of the Incident Command System (ICS) is a natural transition for veterans to understand and ultimately master. The military is set up in a similar design as the basic ICS structure. At the battalion and above level, almost every military unit will have the following in their command and staff (S-shop) structure:

■ Commander.
■ Executive Officer.
■ S1 (Personnel).
■ S2 (Intelligence).
■ S3 (Operations).
■ S4 (Logistics).
■ S5 (Civil-Military Operations and Public Affairs).
■ S6 (Signals – communications and technology).

When you compare this military structure with the basic ICS structure [Incident Commander, Command Staff (Public Affairs Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer), and the four Section Chiefs (Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Financial/Admin)], it is a close match that is very intuitive for a veteran to both understand and execute within after transitioning into an emergency management position.

Additionally, the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) is very similar to the basic principles of ICS and many of its standard forms. According to the Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, "the Operations Process and MDMP are both used by the Army to plan, prepare, execute, and assess military operations." MDMP, at its core, is a process that helps commanders, staff, and others think critically and creatively in planning. There are seven steps within MDMP:

■ Receipt of Mission.
■ Mission Analysis.
■ Course of Action Development (COA).
■ COA Analysis.
■ COA Comparison.
■ COA Approval.
■ Orders Production, Dissemination, and Transition.

Veterans in Emergency Management

Each of the steps within the MDMP is, in essence, replicated throughout ICS forms (just under a different naming convention and format). Veterans who transition to the emergency management profession quickly adapt their vernacular and can implement the ICS with relative ease.

Going further, the military Operations Order (OPORD) is even more like associated ICS forms than many realize. An OPORD is a standard planning and execution document that every military member is trained to know and implement. The OPORD consists of five critically important elements that detail the SITUATION, MISSION, (the 5 W's and Commander's intent and end-state), EXECUTION (with command structure organization, specified and implied tasks to subordinate and adjacent units, timelines, and coordinating instructions, SERVICE SUPPORT (logistical and sustainment coordination measures), and COMMAND & CONTROL (how everyone communicates with primary, alternate, and tertiary modalities). Sounds a lot like some ICS forms we use on a regular basis! This level of planning and attention to detail is paramount in both military and emergency management, and military veterans are often some of the most experienced in this domain when they transition into the civilian sector.

Finally, to dive in a little more about the "Five Skills Veterans Bring to Your Business and Why You Should Hire Them" in U.S. Veterans Magazine, whether working 'in the field' on top of the hood of a truck or in an emergency operations center (EOC), the military veteran is going to fit in, feel comfortable, and contribute to meeting the objectives of the

mission. Additionally, the military is unlike any other profession in the world in that it forces all walks of life to operate in a cohesive unit, regardless of the environment or mission. Diversity, adversity, and overcoming physical, mental, and emotional challenges is a standard all veterans have to accept and master to be successful. Resiliency and adaptability are not just buzz words—they are earned the hard way through trial, tribulation, and ultimately, triumph. With the complexity and interconnectivity of the challenges we face in this century and beyond, what better transferrable skill sets could there be for a veteran to transition into emergency management?

It's also important to understand that although there are limited emergency management positions within the military, and as described earlier, veterans of all military occupational specialties bring an abundance of soft skills like interpersonal communication, teamwork, leadership skills, and collaboration. Furthermore, military veterans are accustomed to long hours in less-than-ideal environments. They are mission-focused and do not mind working "after hours." "Embracing the suck" is a common characteristic of all veterans (Embracing the suck simply means dealing with adversity in just about any environment).

A few words of caution. Supervisors without any military experience, or who have not worked with military personnel often have the stereotype that veterans have stern, take-charge attitudes, and therefore, may have a difficult time adapting to civilian operations, including civilian supervisors. But most veterans are situational leaders who quickly adapt to their new roles and responsibilities. Veterans thrive in a teamwork environment and enjoy working with others. The term "staffing" likely came from the military which implies the need and desire to work together before taking action or submitting

written correspondence.

Veterans seem to be a natural fit in the emergency management profession. They take pride in collaboration, teamwork, and information sharing. They understand and prioritize training needs, and when in a supervisory position, take pride in taking care of their staff. Veterans get the job done—mission accomplishment. ◆

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EM Calendar

Feb. 28	Virtual Community Discussion & Art Workshop: Exploring Your Resiliency Zone
March 5-6	Disaster Expo USA Miami Beach Convention Center Miami Beach, Florida
March 11	ResCon 2025
March 17	2025 Virginia Emergency Management Symposium
March 27	2025 Lehigh Valley Emergency Services Conference
April 14-17	2025 National Hurricane Conference Hilton New Orleans Riverside Hotel New Orleans, Louisiana

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