

# Domestic Preparedness Journal

## Women in the Field

### Honoring Women's History Month



Volume 20 Issue 3

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# Take Domestic Preparedness



On The Go

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# An Editor's Personal Journey to Emergency Preparedness

By Catherine L. Feinman

I confess that, in 2009, I did not know anything about emergency preparedness. Now, I am the editor of a publication with a nationwide readership of professionals who prepare their communities for any possible emergency or disaster. What an exciting journey from unknowingly unprepared to finding a passion that would change my life! This journey began with an exciting new opportunity to work for a practitioner publication after spending a couple of decades in academic journals. However, I realized almost immediately that the best part of this job would not be the words on the page but the women and men behind those words who would inspire me and so many others across the country.

After settling into the new role, I could not stop thinking about how Domestic Preparedness writers and advisors were helping their communities. So, I sat down with one of the publication's advisors, who always promoted volunteer organizations, and asked, "Where should I start if I want to volunteer in my community?" And so, it began. I joined the local Citizen Corps chapter the next day and soon received my Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. There was no going back at that point because I wanted more. So, the next step was to sign up to become an emergency medical technician at the local firehouse, which later led to Firefighter I training. With a love of reading, writing, and learning, getting a master's degree in emergency and disaster management was a logical next step. The latest inspiration from the writers and advisors involved the communications aspect of emergency response – getting an amateur radio license. Stay tuned because this preparedness journey is unlikely to end anytime soon.

In honor of Women's History Month, this March edition of the Domestic Preparedness Journal features articles by inspirational women who, through their service and writing, are instrumental in building more prepared and resilient communities. For more inspiration, this issue also shares valuable insights on the challenges that the members of the 2024-2025 Editorial Board urge communities to think about and prepare for in 2024. Thank you to all those who serve and protect their communities and who lead others down their individual preparedness paths of education, training, and service.

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# **Emergency Management Goes to the Hill**

**By Kay C. Goss and  
Catherine L. Feinman**



Television shows share the heroic, albeit not always accurate, stories of public safety and emergency response agencies. Realistic or not, these programs help the public understand some of the defined roles and responsibilities of firefighters, police officers, paramedics, and emergency room doctors and nurses. However, a key player is missing from these “emergency” shows: the emergency manager. Russ Strickland, president of the National Emergency Management Association, highlighted this observation in “The State of Emergency Management” Senate briefing on March 21, 2024. He said that one of the biggest challenges for emergency managers is that “Nobody knows who we are.” Unlike the disciplines that make compelling television plotlines, emergency management often occurs behind the scenes. However, these professionals still need support.

Overcoming emergency management challenges brought the leaders of three nationwide organizations together in Washington, D.C., on March 21. Mark Sloan, president of Big City Emergency Managers, and Justin Kates, president of the International Association of Emergency Managers, joined Strickland to brief the Senate on the current state of disaster response in the United States and emergency management’s critical legislative priorities. This joint effort highlighted the need for government legislation and funding to support emergency management initiatives and to address other gaps within the emergency management discipline.

## **All Disasters Are Local**

For each major disaster that draws federal assistance, thousands more events do not. Each year, this leaves communities nationwide managing their response and recovery efforts and making preparedness and

mitigation investments to lessen future losses of lives and property without federal funding. Even small incidents can strain local and state emergency management workforces when coupled with demanding daily operations and emerging threats.

The Fiscal Year 2024 congressional appropriations bills call for 9% cuts to key funding programs like the Emergency Management Performance Grant, Urban Area Security Initiative, and the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program. This reduction in federal funding could mean staffing cuts at the local and state levels. Although appropriations funding for the National Weather Service, which Kates called “the backbone of our preparedness efforts,” was not reduced, it would still face significant challenges without additional funding. Staffing shortages and outdated equipment are just two factors that could affect the National Weather Service’s ability to support the weather forecasts, warnings, and alerts that emergency managers depend on to make informed decisions and plans for pending threats.

In addition to response efforts, mitigation is critical. Although mitigation projects can take years to build, investments pre-incident significantly reduce response and recovery dollars later. As the frequency and severity of disasters increase, such funding can have an even greater financial impact on the total cost of each incident. Mitigation investments can include education, training, building codes and standards, and other preparedness actions to increase resilience within each residence, business, or other community facility. In implementing all the phases of emergency management, emergency managers are increasingly emphasizing mitigation during their recovery efforts to better prepare their communities and organizations for future disasters.

## Supplemental Funding and Resources

Supplemental grant funding can help at the local, state, tribal, and territorial levels, but it is not always available or adequate to meet the needs. When the federal government reduces program funding or does not adjust it to match the growing needs, some communities will experience gaps that cannot be closed. These economic impacts can delay response and increase recovery times, particularly when disasters overlap or have cascading effects. In addition, as Kates described, red tape and strict guidelines tend to focus on the inputs and outputs rather than the outcomes.

More flexibility in allocating federal funds to where they are needed most at the local level would help close some existing gaps in the process. Emergency management looks at the big picture and the interconnectedness within it. Still, grants tend to focus and restrict funding based on specific components (e.g., funds to rebuild a structure may not allow any changes that could make the structure more resilient during the next incident). There are many federal programs that communities rely upon before, during, and after a disaster, so it is crucial that this support not only continues but also increases as needed to align with the changing threat environment. To highlight this point, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) received a [record-setting request](#) in FY2023 of \$8 billion for two of its infrastructure and resilience grant programs. However, those programs only had \$1.8 billion to offer. A few examples of these critical resources with growing demands are listed below.

### *Funding Streams*

- The [Disaster Relief Fund](#) is a primary support for post-disaster assistance, but

the money will likely run out without additional investment.

- The [Emergency Management Performance Grant](#) invests in core capabilities across the emergency management mission areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. However, the ongoing management costs can expire before meeting the need.
- The [Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program](#) helps close capability gaps to meet the National Preparedness Goal to make the nation secure and resilient.
- The [State Homeland Security Program](#) provides financial assistance to enhance national resilience against natural and human-caused threats at the state, local, tribal, and territorial levels.
- The [Urban Area Security Initiative](#) funds high-threat, high-density urban areas to protect against terrorist threats.
- The [Hazard Mitigation Grant Program](#) helps local, state, tribal, and territorial governments develop mitigation plans and rebuild to reduce future losses.
- The [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities](#) program supports communities by providing financial assistance for hazard mitigation projects.

### *Mutual Aid and Training*

- The [Emergency Management Assistance Compact](#) facilitates sharing resources and deploying personnel across disciplines and jurisdictions.
- FEMA's [Emergency Management Institute](#) provides online and in-person training and education for emergency management professionals.

- FEMA’s [Higher Education Program](#) brings together academia, professional organizations, and practitioners to encourage continuous learning, innovation, and research in emergency management.

### *Legislation to Watch*

- An update to the Wildfire Response Improvement Act ([H.R.7070](#)) has been introduced to elevate wildfire threats to the level of other natural hazards like hurricanes.
- The Disaster Assistance Simplification Act ([S.1528](#)) has passed the Senate and is with the House. It aims to transform the federal government’s process for providing disaster assistance.
- The AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act of 2023 ([S.1669](#) and [H.R.3413](#)) has been introduced to preserve AM radio capabilities in vehicles.
- The Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act ([S. 3071](#)) has been introduced to allow state and local emergency managers to utilize management costs across all open disasters. This legislation would get FEMA home sooner, incentivize the close-out of disaster recovery projects, and drive down federal disaster costs.

### **Professionalization of Emergency Management**

NEMA released a [white paper](#) in 2023 entitled “Empowering State Emergency Management to Meet Current and Emerging Threats,” which provides recommendations for building state emergency management capacity and prioritizing resilience. FEMA is also crafting survey questions for a comprehensive study that will help identify emergency management needs. While



these national-level efforts can help, the definition of emergency management and its roles and responsibilities must begin at the local level because, as emergency managers often say, “all disasters are local.” There are numerous documents related to emergency management. However, for communities to understand the profession as it does other public safety roles, Strickland, Sloan, and Kates said it is time to professionalize emergency management.

“Other duties as assigned” is a common job descriptor. This line item, though, often rises to the top in emergency management to describe an emergency manager’s daily operations. Promoting interagency coordination, creating planning templates, developing public awareness and education campaigns, building resource capacity, and ensuring rapid response and recovery to incidents of all sizes are just a few of emergency managers’ tasks on any given day. A consensus at the briefing was that emergency management needs to clearly define its role and standardize what the profession should look like at the local and state levels. Degree programs that are consistent across states can help develop what the profession looks like. Some national organizations have already established voluntary programs that facilitate a standardized approach to emergency management:

- The [Emergency Management Accreditation Program](#) is an independent, nonprofit organization’s tool that offers a voluntary assessment and accreditation process based on standards for emergency management programs.
- The International Association of Emergency Managers offers the [Associate Emergency Manager and Certified Emergency Manager](#) certificates to individuals who meet

core knowledge, education, and experience criteria.

- The [Council for the Accreditation of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Education](#) offers accreditation for post-secondary education in the emergency management and homeland security disciplines.
- The International Association of Emergency Managers’ [Higher Education Academician Caucus](#) assesses the value of credentialing higher education programs. It also provides an academic perspective on the Emergency Management Institute’s rebranding to the “Emergency Management College.”

Strickland proposed one model that could help standardize the training and education of new members within the field. In the medical system, after students graduate from medical school, they have additional post-graduate training in a residency program to develop their specialization before being released to practice medicine. A similar track for emergency managers would combine education at an institute of higher learning with a training period, after which they would receive a standard, nationally recognized emergency management certification.

### **Call to Action for Emergency Managers**

During the Senate briefing on March 21, the three leaders from the National Emergency Management Association, International Association of Emergency Managers, and Big City Emergency Managers urged Congress to restore and increase funding for essential federal grant programs that directly impact emergency management operations. They highlighted the importance of financial investments in capabilities like building new

technology to improve weather forecasts, warnings, and alerts. However, they also had action items for professionals already in the emergency management field.

People in the profession need to recruit and train a new generation of emergency managers. They should collaborate with nongovernmental organizations to fill gaps created by the recent funding cuts and prioritize lifeline infrastructures to ensure their maintenance during a crisis. Looking across disciplines, they can increase resilience communitywide. For example, it is crucial to understand the cascading effects of an incident within the supply chain. They could also help design emergency management plans to implement new rules under the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s proposed

overhaul of the Fire Brigade Standard ([29 CFR 1910.156](#)), which would be renamed Emergency Response.

The emergency management field is still evolving and discovering ways to define and promote its role within the community and solicit the resources needed to manage a growing number of threats, hazards, and risks. The leaders from three national emergency management organizations went to Washington, D.C., to advocate for more funding, training, and education for emergency managers. The impact of that briefing on Congress and its legislative decisions is yet to be determined. However, the emergency management professionals packed in that room for the Senate briefing are energized to keep moving forward.



*Kay Goss has been the president of World Disaster Management since 2012. She is the former senior assistant to two state governors, coordinating fire service, emergency management, emergency medical services, public safety, and law enforcement for 12 years. She then served as the Associate Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Director for National Preparedness, Training, Higher Education, Exercises, and International Partnerships (presidential appointee, U.S. Senate confirmed unanimously). She was a private sector government contractor for 12 years, at the Texas firm, Electronic Data Systems as senior emergency manager and homeland security advisor and SRA International’s director of emergency management services. She is a senior fellow at*

*the National Academy for Public Administration and serves as a nonprofit leader on the Board of Advisors for DRONERESPONDERS International and for the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management. She also has been a graduate professor of Emergency Management at University of Nevada at Las Vegas for 16 years, İstanbul Technical University for 12 years, the MPA Programs Metropolitan College of New York for five years, and George Mason University. She has been a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) for 25 years and a Featured International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) CEM Mentor for five years, and chair of the Training and Education Committee for six years, 2004-2010.*



*Catherine L. Feinman, M.A., joined Domestic Preparedness in January 2010. She has more than 35 years of publishing experience and currently serves as editor of the Domestic Preparedness Journal, DomesticPreparedness.com, and The Weekly Brief. She works with writers and other contributors to build and create new content that is relevant to the emergency preparedness, response, and recovery communities. She received a bachelor’s degree in International Business from the University of Maryland, College Park, and a master’s degree in Emergency and Disaster Management from American Military University.*



*Women are a growing segment of amateur radio and are making an impact by boosting emergency communications.*

*Source: Audry Groff, AJ2H*

# Amateurs of Action – The Women of Radio

By Desiree Baccus

**A**mateur radio clubs serve as microcosms where participants can learn about technology and build and contribute to a rich blend of technical discussions, skillsets, and strategies. These clubs provide opportunities to excel in skills essential for effective communication and collaboration within the amateur radio environment. Radio operators actively contribute to ham radio’s disaster communication, task management, and analytical reasoning found in risk management and troubleshooting scenarios.

To participate in amateur radio, also known as [ham radio](#), individuals must obtain a license from their country’s telecommunications authority, such as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the United States. The licensing process typically involves passing an exam covering basic radio theory, regulations, and operating procedures. Licenses are divided into different classes, each granting privileges to access specific frequency bands and modes of communication. Adherence to FCC rules and regulations is essential for all amateur radio operators, ensuring orderly and responsible service operation. From station identification to technical standards compliance, these regulations uphold the integrity of the amateur radio community, fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and public service among its participants.

## About Ham Radio

Amateur radio is a vibrant hobby and public service that enables licensed individuals to communicate globally using a variety of radio frequencies. With a history of over a century, amateur radio enthusiasts engage in diverse activities ranging from traditional voice communication to cutting-edge digital modes and satellite operations. Some of the opportunities that operators explore include:

- Science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) outreach and education with signal triangulation events such as high-altitude ballooning;
- Radio astronomy – when they find and identify a newly discovered comet, they get to name it;
- Earth-Moon-Earth ([EME](#)) communications, where they use the Moon in radio communications;
- Talking to NASA Astronauts on board the International Space Station;
- Contesting, where they make contact with other ham radio operators for points to acquire awards;
- Skydiving and making as many voice contacts as possible before reaching the ground;
- [Morse code](#), or CW; and
- Comradery and community with fellow operators.

Beyond its abundant recreational aspects, ham radio is a vital [communication lifeline during emergencies](#), providing resilient communication channels when traditional infrastructure fails. Amateur radio works when all other communications fail for any reason – for example, fast-moving forest fires, unexpected tornado activity, or traditional cell phone disruptions due to a solar storm. Many amateur radio operators volunteer their skills and equipment to support disaster response efforts, facilitating critical information exchange between emergency responders, government agencies, and affected communities.

Organizations within amateur radio observe and train each month to provide resources when needed most. For example:

- Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES), which the National Association for Amateur Radio (ARRL) sponsors in the United States;
- Skywarn, which includes Amateur Radio Severe Weather Watchers who the National Weather Service trains to observe and report severe weather conditions; or
- Amateur Radio Auxiliary Communications (AuxComm) teams in local communities nationwide.

The ARES and AuxComm programs emphasize training, coordination, and interoperability among volunteer communicators and public safety agencies, ensuring effective communication and information exchange in times of crisis. By augmenting existing communication infrastructure with resilient amateur radio networks and volunteer expertise, they enhance emergency response capabilities and help safeguard communities during challenging situations.

## Women in Radio

Promoting [women in leadership roles](#) is reaping big rewards in emergency management and is proving critical to preparedness. These women foster visibility and influence within the amateur radio community by speaking over the airwaves. Recognizing the importance of role models in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics ([STEM](#)), they encourage other women to become actively involved in STEM fields, programs, and scholarships. This article shares their diverse life experiences and sheds light on their unique perspectives.

Embracing greater participation of women in amateur radio clubs not only prioritizes diversity but also fosters collaboration and engagement between all licensed amateur radio operators and emergency management operations. Initiatives within the amateur radio community to attract and support women include mentorship programs, supportive social networks, inclusion events at conferences, presentations and talks by women leaders, and community meet-ups. Through these opportunities and programs for male and female operators, there is a rise in influential women to help grow and strengthen the amateur radio community.

In the world of amateur radio, there is a dynamic group of women who are breaking barriers and contributing significantly to emergency preparedness initiatives. These women are enthusiasts and active leaders who bring unique perspectives to the field. From aerospace engineers to animal veterinarians and communication tower climbers, they exemplify the diversity within the amateur radio community.

## Nancy Hall KC4IYD – Connecting Communities Through Aerospace Expertise

Nancy Rabel Hall, KC4IYD, a research scientist and project manager at the NASA



Nancy, KC4IYD, holds a microphone for a Daisy Girl Scout who is the first person to talk to astronaut Jack Fischer (*Source: ARRL Photos*).

Glenn Research Center, is a trailblazer in the amateur radio community. As the [Young Ladies Radio League \(YLRL\)](#) District 8 chair – encompassing Michigan, Ohio, and West Virginia – Nancy is committed to fostering excellence in amateur radio by guiding the YLs (Young Ladies = Female Amateur Radio Operators) in her district. The YLRL is an organization that fosters amateur radio interest and proficiency among women of all ages. Her engagement with local Girl Scout councils is particularly impactful. For example, Nancy led an activity with the Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO) that enabled the group to ask astronauts real-time questions via ARISS (Amateur Radio on International Space Station).

As the president of the NASA Glenn Amateur Radio Club, NA8SA, Nancy combines her technical expertise with a passion for emergency communications and community service. She bridges the gap between NASA Glenn employees and the community by

encouraging participation in Field Day events, emergency communications, and the year-long NASA On The Air events, highlighting NASA milestones.

Nancy is a sentinel for YLs, showcasing that women belong and thrive in technical STEM careers. She does this by bringing in high school interns during the summer and college interns during the Fall and Spring terms to work alongside her. Her engaging approach highlights STEM careers as intriguing, exciting, and enjoyable. She also shows the students the collaborative aspects and how they foster innovative environments available to anyone. Juggling dual roles as a ham radio operator and seasoned engineer at NASA, Nancy exemplifies the boundless possibilities that unfold when individuals pursue their passions in STEM fields. She emerges as an exceptional mentor (called an Elmer) within the amateur radio community, inspiring those who aspire to follow in her footsteps.



Tricia Olson, KØTRD, works with her team at an AERC-sanctioned equine endurance race (Source: WØTLM Photos).

### **Patricia “Tricia” Olson, KØTRD, Radio Club President**

Tricia Olson, KØTRD, differs from the typical radio enthusiast. By profession, she is a veterinarian who brings a unique perspective to the technical world of amateur radio. As the Tri-Lakes Monument Radio Association (WØTLM) president, Tricia demonstrates that amateur radio leadership is open to those with less technical professional backgrounds. Her commitment to amateur radio, emergency preparedness, and community service proves that diverse skills are invaluable in building resilient communication networks.

Under Tricia’s leadership, WØTLM has flourished into a vibrant hub of radio operators by infusing the club with camaraderie and fostering an environment where members can engage in the dual pursuits of learning and fun. As a Colorado not-for-profit organization, the club actively commits to creating a welcoming space and opportunities for members to forge connections, seek assistance, and find mentorship at local [parks](#), meetings, meet-ups,

activities, workshops, and get-togethers. The club focuses on advancing the knowledge of emergency communication skills and amateur radio topics. WØTLM has become a beacon of community, learning, and support, embodying the positive impact that dedicated individuals can have on amateur radio clubs.

### **Keri Varela, N2KNK, Climbing Towers, Breaking Barriers**

Keri Varela, N2KNK, breaks stereotypes as a communications tower climber and radio network engineer. With a strong background in climbing, Keri has significantly contributed to the amateur radio community by enhancing communication infrastructure in challenging terrains. Her work truck, filled with communications hardware, repair equipment, repelling rope, hard hats, tool belts, and handheld transceiver radios, is a testament to her expertise. Notably, it also features unique touches like pink Hello Kitty and vanity callsign stickers, adding a vibrant element to her story. Keri leads by example, inspiring those who may

feel constrained by traditional expectations. One of her accomplishments is that she single-handedly built the Western Colorado ([WestCO](#)) [repeater network](#) with ten sites and ever-growing capabilities. Keri emphasizes the importance of diversity in the field.

Beyond conquering the heights of Rocky Mountain peaks for communication network towers, Keri shares her wisdom, kindness, and mentorship as an ambassador at the local club. Her subtle yet impactful presence encourages others to embrace their voices and individuality. Keri's influence creates positive change within the community, making extraordinary contributions to the world around her.

### **Heatherly Takeuchi, N6HKT, Coordinating Communication for Silicon Valley**

Heatherly Takeuchi, N6HKT, is an acclaimed author and STEM Tudor. Alongside her husband, Tim, W6TST, she stands as an indomitable force in the heart of Silicon Valley, leaving an indelible mark on the amateur radio community. At the forefront of coordination for hundreds of volunteer examiners' amateur radio license testing sessions, Heatherly's influence extends far beyond amateur radio testing and licensing. Her true inspiration lies in how she seamlessly integrates newcomers into the amateur radio landscape, introducing them to the local clubs and organizations they might not otherwise discover.

Her level of friendship and guidance transcends the confines of traditional engagement as she establishes herself as a vital connector, linking valuable shared resources within the San Benito, California, community. As a conduit for physical and communication support, she plays a pivotal role in annually celebrated community events, ranging from small hometown parades to globally recognized affairs like the Garlic Festival in Gilroy, California, and

the International Lifetime Sea Otter Classic in Monterey, California. Heatherly has become a hub of community connection, fostering goodwill and positive relationships through public service opportunities.

Heatherly's impact extends into emergency preparedness education and training courses, where she collaborates closely with professional emergency service organizations in her area. She helps bring cutting-edge techniques and procedures taught by subject matter experts in their Auxiliary Communications Service/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service ([ACS/RACES](#)) and emergency operations center to the public. This tailored training addresses the specific needs and potential threats by providing access to current procedures and regional support. Her involvement exemplifies the integral role of amateur radio in supporting,



Keri Varela, N2KNK, is a professional communication tower climber doing maintenance and repairs on one of the ten (and growing) WestCO fully linked repeater sites she built herself (*Source: Keri Varela photo collection*).



Heatherly Takeuchi, N6HKT, at the San Benito County Emergency Preparedness Firearms Training given by The Well-Armed Woman and U.S. Concealed Carry Association (Source: Heatherly Takeuchi).

aiding, and assisting the public in partnership with professional emergency services to extend the positive effects of collaboration for public safety management and increased community engagement. She builds a legacy of service, connection, and positive influence with each new batch of amateur radio operators she graduates.

### **A Call for More Amateurs of Action**

These women represent the spectrum of talented amateur radio operators nationwide, proving that emergency management and preparedness are everyone's responsibility. There is a place for everyone within the amateur radio community. Their technical

expertise, leadership skills, and diverse life experiences strengthen amateur radio communication networks and build robust communication systems for emergency preparedness. Amateur radio is more than just a hobby. It is a community of individuals with varied talents working together to make a difference when it matters most.

To learn more about how to get an amateur radio license, visit ARRL (The National Association for Amateur Radio) at <https://www.arrl.org/get-involved>

To join a social media group for women in amateur radio, visit Ham Radio Women at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/186742552588173>



*Desiree Baccus, N3DEZ, is a dedicated emergency management professional passionate about amateur radio. She plays vital roles in amateur radio public relations groups, such as ARRL's Public Relations Committee and Rocky Mountain Ham Radio, highlighting her expertise and dedication to amateur radio communications. She also has served as the secretary and vice chair for the Colorado Federal Executive Board Emergency Preparedness Council, where she worked toward enhancing emergency response capabilities in her state.*



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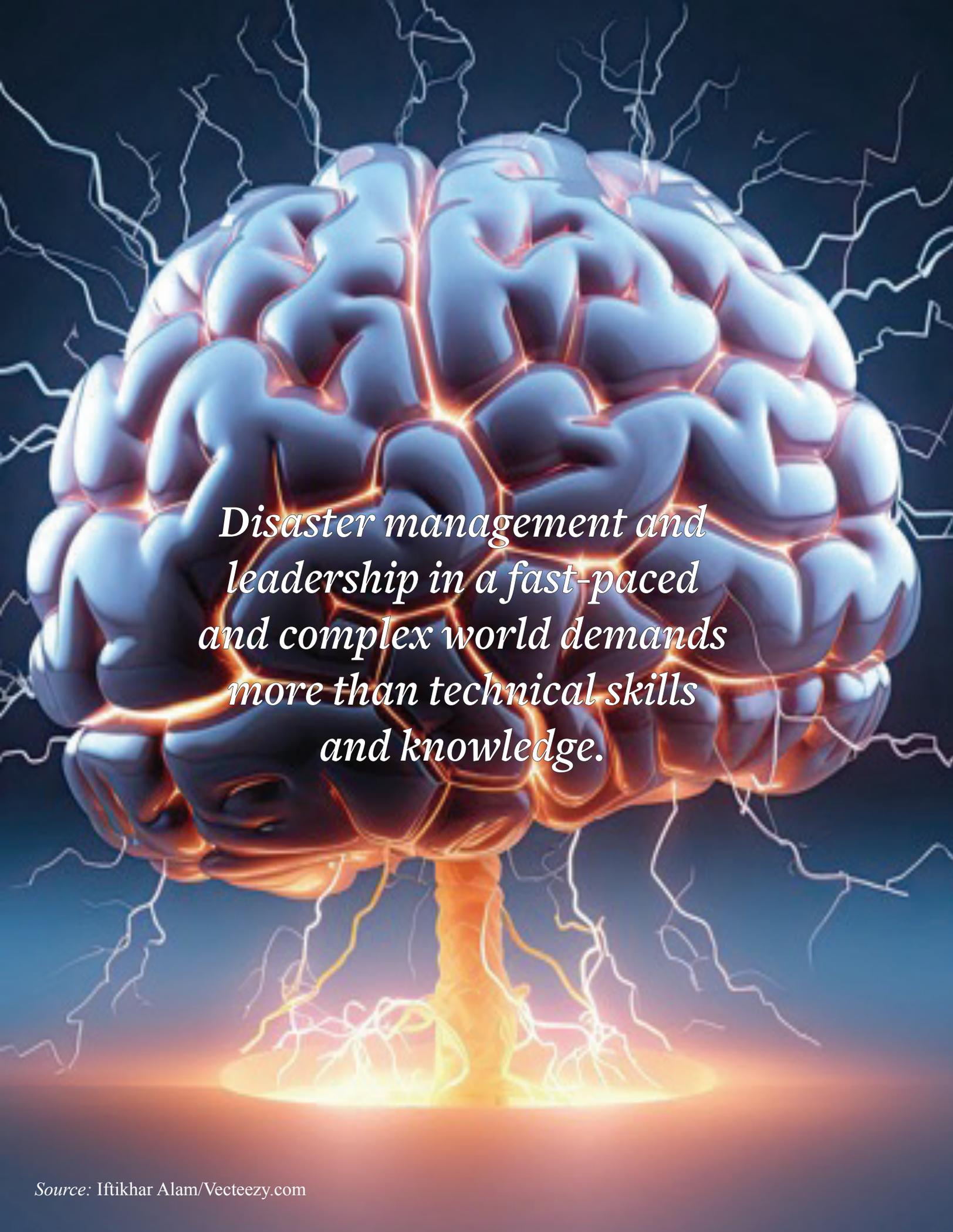
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A stylized, glowing brain with a tree-like structure and lightning bolts. The brain is rendered in shades of blue and purple, with glowing orange and yellow lines tracing its surface and branching out like a tree trunk and roots. The background is dark blue with white lightning bolts striking around the brain. The text is centered over the brain in a white, serif font.

*Disaster management and leadership in a fast-paced and complex world demands more than technical skills and knowledge.*

# Executive Function: The Crisis Leader's Edge in a High-Pressure World

By Kim Guevara

**E**mergency management and crisis leadership demand more than technical skills and knowledge in today's fast-paced and complex world.

To better access information on demand, make appropriate decisions, and lead most effectively, it is essential to understand how the brain works. A critical cognitive skill set known as executive function (EF) is at the heart of effective decision-making in high-pressure situations.

Leaders with robust EF skills are at a distinct advantage. They are better equipped to make informed decisions under pressure and navigate the intricacies of contemporary organizational landscapes and global challenges. EF is especially critical in crisis management and high-stakes decision-making scenarios where clarity of thought and efficient action can be game-changers.

## So, What Exactly Is Executive Function?

For years, the concept of EF has predominantly fallen under neuropsychology, clinical psychology, and psychiatry. Within these fields, knowledge of EF helps address various cognitive disorders and mental health conditions. It provides a framework for

understanding how people plan, organize, strategize, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks – essentially, how to manage mental processes.

Fast forward, and EF is emerging from clinical settings into the broader spheres of general psychology, education, and leadership development conversations. This expansion is a testament to the universality and importance of understanding EF and how brains work in daily life. EF has become a cornerstone for developing teaching strategies and classroom accommodations in educational settings because these skills are vital for academic success and life-long learning and adaptation.

EF is an evolving field of study and [definition](#). Understanding of EF will continue to evolve and expand, fueled by technological and scientific advances, such as functional MRIs and other imaging and measurement tools. Its importance and application may also grow. Although academics debate various components of EF, there is a consensus that EF comprises a set of skills essential for many aspects of cognitive and behavioral regulation involving multiple areas of the brain.

Core components of EF include:

- *Inhibitory control* – The ability to self-regulate and deliberately control impulsive responses or thoughts.
- *Working memory* – The capacity to retain and manipulate information, rapidly update that information with relevant information, and filter out anything irrelevant.
- *Cognitive flexibility* – Often referred to as shifting, cognitive flexibility involves planning, goal-direction, perspective-taking, and adapting to new information or unforeseen changes.

Multiple studies underscore the significance of these components in effective leadership,

particularly in high-stress decision-making environments.

### **Come Again – In Plain Language Please (With a Dash of Neuroscience)!**

EF is like the brain’s air traffic control system. It acts as the brain’s command center, orchestrating thoughts, actions, and emotions to achieve goals.

The air traffic control system supports the coordination of a global network of aircraft. With precision timing to the second, it manages a complex series of 24/7 takeoffs, flights, and landings to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. Looking at a point-in-time [Flight Map](#) and knowing there are an average of 120,000 planes in the air each day, it appears as if airplanes are



Screenshot of air traffic radar (Source: Courtesy of FlightRadar24.com).

stacked on top of each other. Yet, air crashes and collisions are rare.

In the human brain, there are approximately 86 billion neurons. Since each neuron forms connections with others, there is the potential for more than a quadrillion (1,000 trillion) connections. According to another fun fact, information in the brain travels at a rate of about 268 miles (431 km) per hour. Airplanes travel a little faster than that, but comparatively, there are 120,000 planes in the air each day, compared to 86 billion neurons firing. A lot happens in the brain at any given moment, and the brain's EF system has to manage that complex coordination and influx of information and direct mental resources at precise moments of need.

In the same way that air traffic controllers are carefully selected and trained to manage increasingly complex tasks, people can also train their brains to enhance EF capacity and capability. This is possible due to the brain's remarkable ability to change, known as neuroplasticity.

## Executive Function in Action

In an emergency, *inhibition and control* are essential to maintain focus amid the chaos with calm composure and leadership-driven focus.

*Working memory* allows for strategic planning and response, and helps the brain adapt, update, and filter out the irrelevant.

The ability to adapt, change, pivot, challenge biases, and re-think priorities that may keep people anchored and inflexible is core to *cognitive flexibility*.

Many emergency managers come from technical backgrounds – fire, law enforcement, tactical military, healthcare, etc. However, the more complex the emergency, the greater the need to go beyond technical skills and

knowledge. There is the need to think and act differently. For example:

- Who else and what other perspectives do we need to draw in to understand?
- What initial instincts to put out the fire, secure the perimeter, or contain the disease do I need to tap down to think more globally?

Answering these questions requires a higher-order brain process. It involves stopping and recognizing that the most familiar lens may not be the one that most clearly sees the whole picture and the potential cascading impacts.

## Building & Enhancing Executive Function Skills

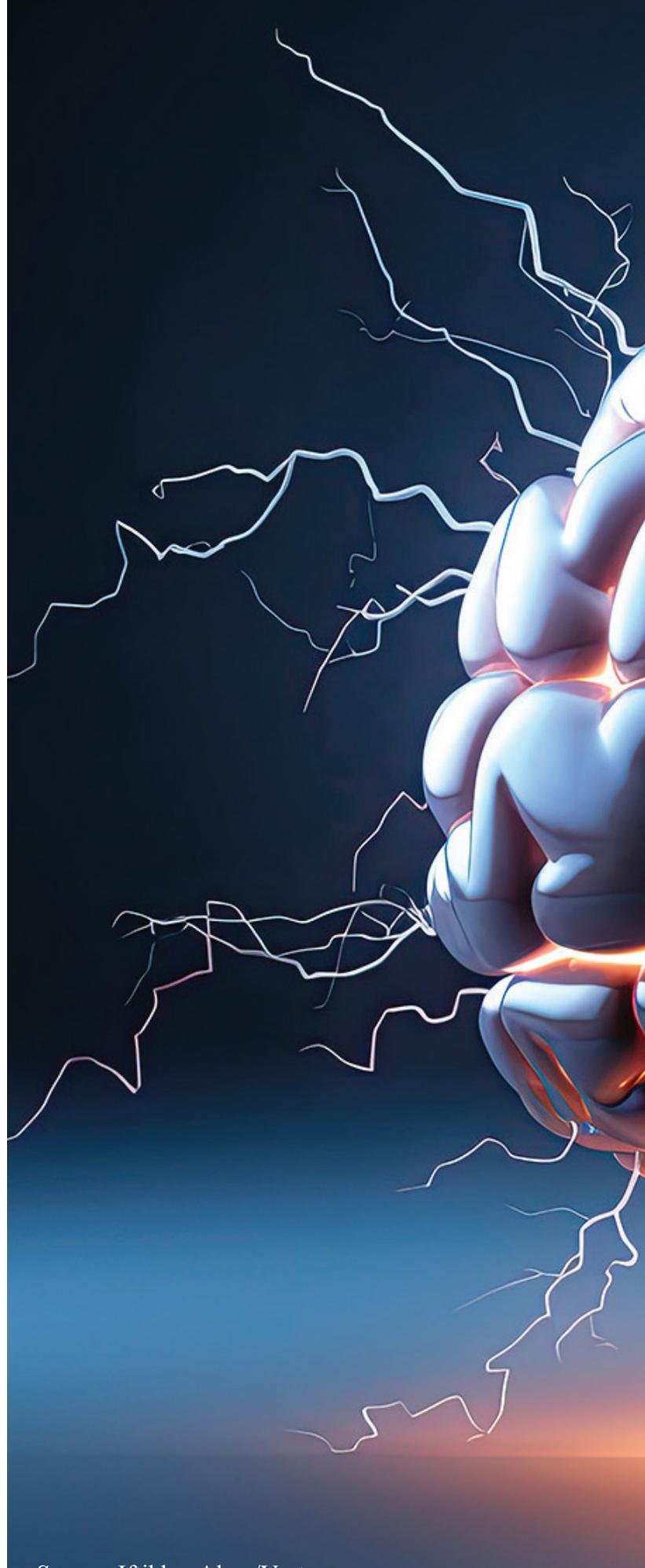
EF does not develop in the moment of crisis. Instead, it comprises the skills, daily practices, and brain and organizational training that occur BEFORE the crisis. This preparedness allows people to rise to the occasion.

When under threat – perceived or real – survival instincts take over. Understanding this and knowing how the brain functions can get people back into the moment and prevent them from sinking to the lowest level of their training.

- *Learn about the brain* – Understand how to harness its power and limitations. Understand how behaviors are rooted in brain function. The brain weighs an average of 3 pounds (1.4 kg) but consumes 20% of the body's energy. It is the supercomputer of supercomputers, and it resides entirely within you.
- *Build emotional intelligence skills* – It is not a fad or something people are born with – it is a set of skills that can be taught and learned. Vice Admiral Thad Allen (U.S. Coast Guard, Retired)

stated in a 2021 Naval Post Graduate School keynote on “Managing Complex Disasters” that “The skills we need to teach to others are empathy, emotional intelligence, and collaboration as we expect emergency managers to step up in a more complex world.”

- *Stress management, emotion regulation, and self-soothing* – Stress can increase executive *dysfunction*, making stress more difficult to handle. Equip your toolbox and encourage others to do the same. Some examples are below, and there are numerous others. Learn what works best for each person:
  - Deep, slow [breathing exercise](#) series: Breathe in for a count of 5, hold for 5, exhale for 8, and hold for 5;
  - “Name it to tame it” emotion labeling; and
  - The [butterfly hug technique](#), which was developed by Lucina Artigas while working with Hurricane Pauline survivors in Acapulco, Mexico, in 1998.
- *Build personal networks and phone a friend (or expert)* – No person is an island or knows everything. Thinking you are, or have to be, will short-circuit the EF system. Include as much diversity in your circle as possible. During an emergency, especially in the midst of a *novel* event, people often need to be with someone to help think it through and re-focus.
- *Mix up routines* – Routines can make people operate on autopilot, like driving home and not remembering how you got there. Routines simplify life, but they can also dull cognitive skills when activities are not varied occasionally. Simple changes, such as taking a



Source: Iftikhar Alam/Vecteezy.com

different route, trying a new food, adding a new exercise to a routine, or starting a meeting at a different time, can enhance cognitive flexibility. Small deviations from the norm help keep the brain engaged.

- Leverage everyday skill-building strategies:
  - *Slow time* – Crises and emergencies and the immediacy of today’s varied media put additional pressure to work faster. This is not procrastination. Rather, a short pause can allow the brain to re-focus and get neurons firing in the same direction. Slowing time may mean a 5-minute break with a walk around the block, building, or floor or some deep breaths to pause and re-center on the goal.
  - *Set a clear mission and goal* – This may be as simple as asking, “What is the goal *now* for the next 5 or 50 minutes?” Goal setting can help calm the noise and allow the brain to reconnect and reengage. EF needs a goal. When it is most

overwhelming, a clear mission and goal can be unifying for the brain and others.

- *Set a timer to stay focused* – It is like giving the brain a mini goal. You can hit repeat or snooze on the digital timer again and again, but the knowledge the timer is on can help keep the brain on track.

## What This Means for Today’s Professionals

This article is a call to action to hone these critical cognitive skills. For leaders and aspiring managers, consciously developing and enhancing EF skills can lead to more effective decision-making, improved problem-solving abilities, and a more strategic approach to challenges – even when those challenges are novel.

Navigating a world that requires and values adaptability, strategic thinking, and effective decision-making, the importance of EF cannot be overstated. Regardless of the role someone plays – a mentor shaping the mind and training the next generation of emergency managers or a leader steering an organization toward success – everyone can benefit from understanding and developing EF skills.



*Kim Guevara, MA, is the founder and CEO of Mozaik Solutions. She has 25 years of experience in emergency management, homeland security, and development. She has provided services to all levels of government, the U.S. military, and the private and non-profit sectors. She is known for building and enhancing emergency and crisis management programs and stakeholder engagement. Her executive experience includes leadership for change management and business transformation initiatives to improve employee morale, talent recruitment, and retention. She has significant international experience in telemedicine and humanitarian development and led and supported initiatives and efforts in Southwest Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. She is the co-creator of the Crisis Athlete™ program, which leverages a unique blend of neuroscience, emotional intelligence,*

*performance coaching, sports and industrial/organizational psychology, and other disciplines to foster resilience and peak performance. She is a significant contributor and author of the groundbreaking study on the unique stressors and organizational challenges in emergency management published in the Journal of Emergency Management in October 2023.*



Source: Benis Arapovic/Vecteezy.com

# Support and Planning Inside 911 Centers

By Heather McGaffin

**C**alls for help come in many forms: a family member encounters a loved one with a medical emergency; a sudden crash occurs on a highway; a fire ignites in an apartment complex; a woman goes into labor. Most people do not have the medical or public safety training to handle these types of situations. However, what is common knowledge is the phone number to dial in an emergency. In the United States, that number is 911.

Many people are not familiar with the operational details behind 911 calls: the location of the call center, the person who answers the call, and how field responders are dispatched and know where to go. These details are all managed in Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs). The public relies on the usually low-profile 911 centers despite not knowing where they are or what happens in them. In most jurisdictions, the public cannot access their local ECCs, which may reside in old grocery stores, basements of working courthouses, old industrial buildings, or in plain sight but are unrecognized. The unseen heroes inside those walls are public safety telecommunicators. Across the country, roughly 6,000 ECCs answer approximately [240 million 911 calls](#) annually.

## What Happens Within the Four Walls

Expectations at ECCs are high. All calls are treated as urgent and expected to be answered in 15 seconds or less to align with national standards. In addition to 911 calls from the public, law enforcement officers call in their traffic stops and receive case numbers from ECCs, and firefighters and emergency medical services personnel request additional units and resources. In short, the ECC is the central nervous system of local public safety, including highly trained and skilled public safety personnel. As the public's initial contact for first responder services, ECC staff may have to talk frantic mothers through the steps of administering CPR to their non-breathing infants or reassure children who are unsure what to do after finding an unconscious parent or guardian.

While the heartbeat of any ECC is the frontline workers who answer the calls and dispatch the field units, there is often a person or a team of professionals handling the ECC's behind-the-scenes physical and social infrastructure. The size of the team and support team frequently depends on the size of the jurisdiction and the type of services needed. Initial and ongoing planning updates are critical, especially in the 911 ecosystem, where standards constantly change, new technology emerges regularly, and laws and guidance evolve. In addition, there is

a nationwide transition away from legacy 911 to [Next Generation 911](#).

The amount of change and improvement occurring in the 911 space of the public safety ecosystem is monumental. Such changes can become problematic for centers if not managed and maintained sensibly and systematically. Solid strategic planning is essential to ensure cohesiveness. Since the 911



industry is constantly evolving, a strong plan is vital to avoid confusion and overlapping initiatives. When strategically planning for something so complex, the focus should be on three pillars of an ECC: the people, the training, and the technology.

### **ECC Strategic Planning**

The support team is responsible for the day-to-day operations flow and the agency's strategic plan. Any ECC's strategic plan should be kept current and be dispersed and utilized throughout the community. The plan

should highlight achievements, planning objectives, key performance measures, and necessary enhancements. The ECC is like a stool – operations are the seat, and the three legs that hold it up are the people, the training, and the technology.

*People* – This leg includes the community the 911 center serves and the people who do the work. So, there are two equally important angles to consider. Since emergency calls are inevitable, strategic plans must include the people who answer the calls. Focus areas include:

- Staffing levels and scheduling;
- Recruitment, retention, and pipeline bolstering;
- Training, certifications, and higher education;
- Customer service;
- Citizen engagement;
- Strong partnerships;
- Proper governance; and
- Retirement.

*Training* – This leg refers to the tools provided to the staff, partner agencies, and community to better understand how 911 works and what is needed to make the response system successful. Focus areas include:

- Initial training;
- Continuing education;
- Career advancement;
- Multi- or cross-agency training;
- Hot topic training (i.e., swatting training for 911 call takers); and
- Training policies.

*Technology* – This leg keeps the ECC running proficiently. It also enables the public to

interact with 911 centers using their personal technologies, which include:

- Next Generation 911 (NG911) migration,
- Text-to-911,
- Enhancements to operations,
- Introduction of artificial intelligence,
- Mobile applications and texting capabilities,
- Video and streaming integration, and
- Cybersecurity.

### Action Items

The [911 system](#) celebrated its 56th anniversary on February 16, 2024. Considering public safety as a whole, 911 capabilities still have a lot of growth potential. Despite significant work and advancements in this space, much more work is necessary. In many cases, though, strategic planning is incumbent upon the localities. Although no comprehensive guide exists to lead ECCs in developing a strategic plan, examples from centers can assist and are an excellent place to start.

Strategic plans do not have to be long or complex. An initial plan can be a simple one-pager of goals with some strategies for

meeting those goals. Over time, the one-pager can expand to include comprehensive long-term goals that span several years. As the ecosystem changes and needs increase, a strategic plan will assist the ECC in evaluating its capabilities and determining its future direction.

The 911 landscape constantly changes, and emergency technologies and threats like artificial intelligence, ransomware, and swatting attacks introduce new challenges. A current and flexible plan creates a firm foundation for navigating those challenges and changes.

Strategic planning is one of the best defenses to ensure robust emergency communications systems for local communities. For those who do not have a plan, take five minutes right now and write down three to five goals to accomplish in your center over the next year or two.

Defining the goals is the first step in developing an ECC's strategic plan. For those who already have a plan, take some time to review and update it. When an emergency happens, solid plans must be in place to ensure someone is there to answer calls for help and dispatch the necessary resources as quickly as possible.

*In an emergency,  
call 911. This  
simple instruction  
is easy to  
remember, but  
many do not  
know about the  
people, training,  
and technology  
required to make  
this lifesaving tool  
available 24-7.*



*Heather McGaffin is the director of The Office of Unified Communications in Washington, DC. At sixteen, she began her public safety career as a volunteer emergency medical technician (EMT) at her local fire department and rescue squad. McGaffin has nearly 25 years of public and private sector experience in public safety, including as a field responder, call taker, dispatcher, and public safety communications expert. In February 2023, Mayor Muriel Bowser appointed her to lead the Washington, DC, Office of Unified Communications. She is also on the board of directors for the Next Generation 911 Institute.*



Employees and visitors at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory stopped to watch the solar eclipse on August 21, 2017 (Source: NASA/Josh Krohn).

# April 2024 Eclipse – Moving From Planning Into Operations

**By Laurel J. Radow**

One of nature’s premier events that many have eagerly anticipated is now weeks away. The April 8, 2024, solar eclipse will cross much of the middle section of the United States – from Mexico to Canada. Calculations made many years ago have heightened expectations and planning efforts among professional and amateur astronomers, educators, eclipse chasers, science writers, other outreach specialists, and the general public. However, as mentioned in a [September 2023 article](#), some of these special event planners “may not have considered including the community’s emergency preparedness and response capabilities or their operational knowledge during planning discussions.”

An April 2023 Domestic Preparedness Journal [eclipse article](#) focused on the planning and preparations underway in many cities, towns, counties, and states that are located under or near the eclipse’s known path. In the weeks between now and the eclipse, attention must turn to the event’s operations. As such, it is important for professionals

who regularly prepare for planned special events – emergencies and incidents that could simultaneously occur – to be involved in eclipse planning.

With so many different groups involved – some with little or no operational experience – the preparedness community has valuable knowledge to share. For example, as frequent users of tabletop and field exercises, these professionals can share guidance with others involved in planning local or state eclipse efforts to make that extended weekend, April 5-9, far more manageable. With a short timeframe, it may be difficult to organize tabletop exercises. However, a facilitated session that walks the event’s planning committee and key volunteers through the day’s schedule is another option. Since some special event planning groups may not be familiar with operational exercises, emergency management and public safety professionals can reach out to these groups about the value of identifying and closing gaps to ensure a successful event.

## Collaborative Community Preparedness

When preparedness professionals share their knowledge with planning committee members, the benefits extend beyond one planned special event. Events like a solar eclipse allow the responder community to explain emergency support functions and how they are used for special events and disasters. This education helps build and maintain a citizen corps resource for future planned and unplanned events.

Events that span the geographical area of the April 8 eclipse are infrequent. In fact, the relatively short period between the last total solar eclipse in 2017 and the upcoming 2024 total eclipse is a rarity for nationwide events. However, people who managed their 2017 eclipse events may have moved to other positions or retired. As people leave, institutional memory dims. As such, the successes and failures may no longer be readily available. Lack of continuity of operations from event to event may limit the understanding of how best to move from planning to implementation and operations.

In 2020, when the American Astronomical Society established its Solar Eclipse Task Force, it also established several working groups. The Local Planning Working Group, co-chaired by the author and Bob Baer of Southern Illinois University, meets regularly – at first, monthly, and now bimonthly – to share plans and activities. Three of the Local Planning Working Group members shared recent activities that show their pivot from planning to operations.

## Indiana and New York Efforts

Barrett Caldwell, professor of Industrial Engineering & Aeronautics and Astronautics at Purdue University, has grounded his engineering students in the practical needs of operations by stressing that they:

*[B]e very explicit and specific with all planning interactions and community partner interactions. It's important for the students to understand that most of our communities have very “diverse levels of understanding” regarding the eclipse details that range from questions about high-quality photography to simple distinctions between the timing and length of totality and the longer period of moon coverage of the sun.*

Based on the data Indiana has collected, the state's eclipse plans have taken the following into account as they move to operations:

- Using information from ticket sales at Indy Motor Speedway that show purchases from 20 to 30 states to help finalize transportation plans;
- Anticipating additional traffic from the Chicagoland area;
- Recognizing the location of the Indianapolis airport in the area of totality; and
- Anticipating traffic surge from Lebanon, Indiana.

As Dr. Caldwell noted, operations for an event of this magnitude require understanding a range of concerns. For example, he stated, “Several of our communities have highlighted the desire for translations of eclipse viewing and other information into Spanish.”

Mitch Lumen, on behalf of the Evansville, Indiana, 2024 Total Eclipse event, added that their shift to operations included contacting the U.S. Coast Guard to coordinate the eclipse response on the Ohio River. They also did more to engage and prepare the business community for the event.



Employees and visitors at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory stopped to watch the solar eclipse on August 21, 2017 (Source: NASA/Josh Krohn).

## Checklists and Other Resources

Checklists provide a clear picture of action items to complete. Recently collected data can enhance these checklists. Many of the eclipse planning committees include a wide range of partners and knowledge. As such, different groups may have used different checklists to complete their specific planning efforts. A shared, consistent checklist for all to use can help limit confusion. In the shift to operations for the 2024 eclipse event, there are many considerations beyond the availability of special eclipse glasses. For example, it is essential to be aware of how different Tribal nations observe (or do not observe) the eclipse. Communications, emergency management, transportation, and the private sector each have critical roles in ensuring public safety within and between special event gatherings.

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Operations, U.S. Department of Transportation, has produced publications to help with preparations and day-of-event operations for planned special events:

- [FHWA Office of Operations publications list](#) – This link provides a comprehensive list of the office's publications in program areas that could help planners manage influxes of traffic and incidents that could hinder the flow to and from event locations.
- [Planned Special Events Traffic Management](#) – This list of publications focuses on traffic management planning for special events.
- [Traffic Incident Management](#) – This publication list provides information for managing traffic when an incident occurs.

# A Checklist for Shifting Eclipse Planning to Operations

<b>General</b>	Gather information about eclipse glasses:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many have been ordered?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where and how will they be distributed?</li> </ul>
<b>Communications</b>	Inform the media of the event operation plans (via print, radio, television, and social media)
	Invite community partners and media (if possible) to emergency operations centers to facilitate information sharing
	Disburse real-time traveler information, including traffic status
<b>Emergency Management</b>	Create and share maps to quickly locate emergency and medical services during the event
	Determine who and how the roads (e.g., local, interstate) will be managed
<b>Transportation</b>	Decide how traveler information will be shared (e.g., 511, portable message signs, alerts sent through websites, etc.)
	Consider potential crowd sizes by looking at the following:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flights from local and nearby airports</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car rentals</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train reservations</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ticket sales for eclipse events</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendee counts from previous special events in the area</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of visas issued for foreign visitors</li> </ul>
	Review transit's involvement in moving visitors (e.g., bus, rail)
	Identify parking lot locations:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots that will be open or closed during the event</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots with and without parking fees</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How payments and money are managed</li> </ul>
	Issue permits for buses and other vehicles used to transport visitors to and from the site
	Determine if school buses are available for use if academic facilities are closed
Establish staging locations to facilitate traffic flow (e.g., parking lots, major roadways, intersections)	
<b>Private Sector</b>	Gather information about the number of hotel rooms rented
	Identify fluxes in restaurant reservations if known

- [Planned Special Events: Checklists for Practitioners](#) – These six checklists can be downloaded and printed to facilitate initial planning activities, a feasibility study, traffic management, implementation activities, day-of-event activities, and post-event activities.
- [Tabletop Exercise Instructions for Planned Events and Unplanned Incidents/Emergencies](#) – This guide can help manage planned special events as well as traffic incidents and emergency responses that may be required during the event.

The following resources are specific to the April 2024 total solar eclipse and provide critical information about what to expect across the United States:

- [Weather-Responsive Management Strategies](#) – This factsheet shares strategies for Departments of Transportation to consider for the upcoming solar eclipse.
- [NASA’s Eclipses Page](#) – This website provides information about solar

eclipses using 3D interactive technology.

The upcoming eclipse is an excellent example of a planned special event that enables event planning committees the time to develop, review, and adjust their plans. Well-thought-out plans lay the groundwork for an organized shift to test those plans and ensure successful implementation and operations on the day of the event. The strength that the preparedness community brings to both phases is their planning knowledge to enable a well-run and safe event. Sharing information with all members of the planning committee throughout the planning and implementation processes will facilitate day-of-event decisions. The preparedness community is familiar with the many partners necessary for this type of planned event and can explain to event planners the intricacies involved with ensuring that attendees arrive and leave safely. By working and communicating with special event planners, emergency management and public safety agencies can promote a safe and successful event.



*Laurel J. Radow is an American Astronomical Society Solar Eclipse Task Force (AAS SETF) member and co-chair of the AAS Local Planning Working Group. She joined the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Department of Transportation in 1996. From 2004 until her retirement at the end of 2016, she served as a member of the FHWA Office of Operation’s Traffic Incident and Events Management Team. In that capacity, she served as program manager for the agency’s Evacuations/Emergencies and Planned Special Events programs and managed a range of Traffic Incident Management tasks. From 2014-2016, she served as vice chair of the National Academy of Sciences Transportation Research Board’s (TRB) Standing Committee on Critical Transportation Infrastructure Protection (AMR10). She recently completed her second and final*

*term as chair of the same committee. In addition to co-chairing the TRB at the October 2018 Resiliency Conference (T-RISE), she also served as guest managing editor for the TR News September/October 2021 Issue no. 335, “State of Emergency: What Transportation Learned from 9/11.”*



Marina in Florida after Hurricane Michael (Source: Joanna Conroy, 2018).

# Gaining New Skills During Emergency Management Assistance Compact Assignments

By Inés Bebea

**A**fter a disaster strikes, local resources can become quickly overwhelmed. When Puerto Rico suffered a 6.4-magnitude earthquake on January 6, 2020, most of the island was left without power. Buildings were damaged, roads and trees uprooted, and the aftershocks displaced many people from their homes. As a commonwealth of the United States, Puerto Rico qualified for an Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) after former Governor Wanda Vazquez declared a state of emergency.

Since the U.S. Congress ratified the EMAC in 1996, careers in the emergency management field have expanded as emergencies have changed and, in many areas, increased in frequency over the years. Whether responding to an earthquake in Puerto Rico, a building collapse in Florida,

a tornado in Kentucky, or a wildfire in Oregon, the governor-led declared state-of-emergency responses and requests continue to foster relationships among states and improve best practices for future responses. EMAC is a mutual aid support from state to state that allows for personnel, equipment, and other resources during an emergency. Relationships built among cities, states, agencies, territories, and national organizations support the EMAC, which allows emergency management professionals to collaborate in different jurisdictions.

As emergencies have evolved, so have career opportunities in emergency management. Today, the field brings together people from many backgrounds and career paths. Some enter the field directly from college, some as a second career, and others have circumstances that lead them to this career over time.

To demonstrate the diverse paths into the profession, three women from the New York City Emergency Management Department (NYCEM) shared the unique backgrounds that led them to this field.

## **DANIELLE DALY – FINDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO ASSIST OTHER JURISDICTIONS**

As a graduate student earning a degree in international development from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, Danielle Daly thought she had her career planned out. That was until she took a class focusing on disasters in 2010.

By 2024, she held emergency management roles in the NYCEM, the American Red Cross Greater New York, and the New York State Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services Office of Emergency Management. Daly is also Advance Team (A-Team) certified for the EMAC, a role that continues to strengthen her passion and open doors in the industry.

“EMAC is the national standard of mutual aid, and for me, it is at the heart of what we do as emergency managers. It allows us to help other jurisdictions, and at the same time, we learn from each other,” said Daly, who joined NYCEM in 2016 as a logistics program manager and is now director of mutual aid and request processing. As an industry veteran, Daly sees EMAC deployments as an opportunity to bring more women into the field at all levels of leadership, response, and recovery:

*Emergency management has to be accepted as a profession of its own and not just as a second career for retirees or transfers from public safety agencies. This field is its very own career path. I've been doing this for 10 years, and you are seeing professionals like me more and more, where this is not a second career. We are some of*

*the first in a growing wave of people doing this as a primary profession, and agencies need to be deliberate in their hiring and their opportunities. It needs to be more open to everyone.*

At the Red Cross, Daly had deployed to North Carolina and the Adirondacks. With NYCEM, she was part of an EMAC assignment to Puerto Rico following the 2017 earthquake. She said the challenges of responding to a disaster became clear even before the plane landed. Once on the ground in Puerto Rico, she said the task of setting up the necessary systems to respond to the EMAC assignment intensified as the team faced issues with utilities and transportation:

*Before departing from New York, the plan was for us to stay in a base camp initially, but we were moved to a hotel 90 minutes from San Juan right before we got on our flight. [NYCEM] staff eventually found a closer hotel for us, but that first drive out to the hotel was terrifying. There weren't any lights or traffic signals of any kind. Debris was still in the roads – almost completely blocking them in some areas (we had to swerve around a tree on the highway at one point).*

During the assignment, as an A-Team certified EMAC, Daly worked on processing EMAC requests – keeping teams informed on the status of requests, ensuring that the documentation was in place, and capturing details in operational meetings for potential requests. The experience reinforced Daly's interest in the field and the importance of collaboration between different jurisdictions:

*I mostly remember being stressed since I was helping support the EMAC response from both sides (helping the logs staff in [New York City] get the offers in order and*



New York Emergency Management Assistance Compact teams in action (Sources: Danielle Daly, 2017; Natalie Grybauskas, 2022).

*processing as the receiver). To manage the intense emotions of the response, I focused on one problem, one doable task, resolved it, then moved on. Kept doing it until the day was over. Made a list for the next day and started again. Prioritizing the varying needs while also planning for the coming days and weeks put a real toll on the [Federal Emergency Management Agency] and [Puerto Rico Emergency Management Agency] staff that was there, especially as the [Puerto Rico Emergency Management Agency] staff were also dealing with the fact that their homes and families were affected by what had happened. At its core, EMAC is about jurisdictions helping jurisdictions, we definitely got to do that here.*

## **JOHANNA CONROY – FULFILLING A DESIRE TO HELP PEOPLE**

When Johanna Conroy entered the emergency management field, she wanted to help people. While her initial professional goal was to assist people as an attorney, her career now spans over 20 years in various roles and agencies responding to emergencies. In 2005, Conroy joined NYCEM as a health and medical planner and is now the assistant commissioner for interagency coordination.

Before NYCEM, she was a volunteer coordinator with the Red Cross. In that role, she helped train and deploy volunteers. Moving from the Red Cross to the emergency management field, where fewer women have



Marina in Florida after Hurricane Michael  
(Source: Joanna Conroy, 2018).

held leadership roles, Conroy made a name for herself:

*The emergency management field is not as diverse as it should be, ... but I was lucky to follow some great women who were blazing the trail. I had to overcome my fear of the unknown, and the only way to do that was to jump into the work and listen and learn. I felt a lot of imposter syndrome, but I slowly stopped being afraid and started taking the lead.*

One of those challenging assignments was as part of an EMAC deployment to Florida in October 2018 to assist with the Hurricane Michael response and recovery. Conroy assisted with volunteer and donation management. She was eager to be part of an EMAC activation because of the great EMAC teams New York City received after Hurricane Sandy:

*EMAC contracts are important because they allow the local emergency managers, who have been working the immediate weeks of the response, to take a step back to care for their own families who may have also been affected by the disaster. It allows people from other places who are subject matter experts to come in and assist with fresh eyes, new energy, and ideas for the operation. When it is your home city that is impacted, you are often dealing with grief, fear, and other tough emotions. Getting more people in to assist with the response is a great support, especially in locations that may not have a lot of depth in their emergency management departments.*

Over the years, Conroy has seen many more women join the field. Emergency management has also broadened to require expertise in

non-field response areas such as recovery and mitigation planning, external affairs, geographic information systems, public health, urban planning, and many more.

## **NATALIE GRYBAUSKAS – EXPANDING HER PUBLIC SERVICE ROLES**

Natalie Grybauskas is the assistant commissioner for response with NYCEM. Her career in public service and mayoral administration roles vary significantly: lifeguard, media research analyst, deputy press secretary, senior advisor for emergency management, and chief of operations, just to name a few.

In September 2022, the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) Incident Management Assistance Team deployed to Florida on an EMAC request to support recovery efforts from Hurricane Ian. When a second group deployed to Florida, Grybauskas went along as a trainee to shadow them. NYCEM has an incident management team program, and the FDNY incident management team has helped in a mentorship capacity since the beginning of the program. For Grybauskas, shadowing them during the initial part of that team’s deployment was helpful for understanding how EMAC requests work and what it looks like when an incident management team deploys on an EMAC. She also had an opportunity to

work out of the state emergency operations center in Tallahassee, Florida:

*NYCEM’s incident management team is an important program for the agency. We are much smaller than FDNY’s team, but our capability to respond to larger incidents within a contained geographic area is important to develop for our responses within NYC. One day, if the team continues to grow, we may be able to deploy on an EMAC request, but it will take a few years before we have enough qualified members.*

## **GETTING INVOLVED IN EMACS**

For the NYCEM staff, being part of an EMAC assignment provided new career opportunities that expanded the reach of their day-to-day responsibilities. One of the founding cornerstones of emergency management is the spirit of collaboration. In their response plans, many cities, states, and territories are willing to share resources and staff outside their jurisdictions. Through EMAC assignments, states ensure that no jurisdiction has to respond to an emergency alone. For more information on EMAC, visit <https://www.emacweb.org>



*Inés Bebea is the deputy press secretary for the New York City Emergency Management Department (NYCEM). NYCEM helps New Yorkers prepare, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Prior to joining the agency, Ines worked in a public information role with the Kings County District Attorney’s Office and held various reporting and editing positions with NBC, France 24, and The Network Journal. Ines was born and raised in Madrid, Spain.*



Source: [Koshu Kunii/Unsplash](#) (2020).

# The Evolution of Homeland Security Higher Education

By Heather Issvoran

**T**errorism, transnational criminal organizations, critical infrastructure attacks, and cyberattacks are just a few of the top 2024 threats identified in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's latest [Homeland Threat Assessment](#). The homeland security landscape has profoundly transformed since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The generation that answered that call has largely retired, passing the torch to a new breed of leaders who face different challenges. In addition, the threats have become more complex and dynamic in an era of rapid technological advancement and global interconnectedness.

## Applying Academic Learning

Educational opportunities must evolve to keep up with the changing threat landscape, which requires forward-thinking academics and practitioners. However, education in a classroom, online, with a hybrid approach, or self-study courses should impart more than just knowledge. An effective program empowers students to apply that knowledge within their respective agencies and

organizations. Since 2001, homeland security educational programs have expanded to include graduate degrees. Higher-education opportunities can help cultivate critical thinkers who can translate theory into action by implementing strategies and policies that help enhance domestic security. By blending academic theory with real-world applications, students can acquire the analytical skills and strategic mindset necessary to confront the complex challenges of the 21st century.

In addition, graduate degree programs in homeland security provide the tools for practitioners to apply their homeland security research findings to inform strategic initiatives within their agencies or even to help draft and implement new legislation. Agencies working together to build effective relationships before disasters are better positioned to mitigate risk and save lives. The same can be true for relationships that educational institutions promote by bringing together practitioners from across disciplines and jurisdictions

to collaborate on complex issues like cybersecurity and AI, as well as to look beyond the horizon for emerging challenges in the short- and long-term. The diversity of disciplines and agencies in each classroom enhances the perspectives of the entire homeland security community. For example, public health, transportation, utilities, the military, and the private sector all have important roles in the larger homeland security mission. The impact of homeland security higher education extends far beyond the walls of academia. Collaborative research, shared experiences, and multidisciplinary interactions within the classroom can help strengthen interagency relationships and increase the resilience and adaptability of practitioners and their communities after graduation.

### **Evolving to Meet New Needs**

It can be daunting to think about all the threats communities face and how to keep pace as new threats emerge. However, in an academic environment, students can make evidence-based assertions and ask questions without feeling the pressure to have all the answers. Empowering students within an educational environment makes it more likely they will share best practices with the agencies in their communities or use a thesis to solve a wicked problem they face in the field. Whether taking a homeland security course or developing homeland security efforts for a community, consider the following actions:

- Embrace new technologies and methodologies,
- Be resilient in the face of adversity,

- Commit to safeguarding the nation's well-being,
- Understand that the key to effective security lies not just in physical defenses but in cultivating a resilient and cohesive society, and
- Encourage self-care, such as seeking mental health, to strengthen first responders.

Whatever comes next in the evolution of homeland security, education and training will remain critical components that will continually evolve. Despite the daily demands of their jobs, first responders and public safety professionals should consider adding the challenge of an academic program to equip themselves and better protect their communities. Every person in public service and emergency response should feel the pressure of thinking beyond their agency mission. Modern threats transcend city limits and national borders. In today's interconnected world, events happening thousands of miles away can have direct repercussions on local communities.

Game-changing technologies like AI require analysis and collaboration unlike anything experienced before. While AI holds immense potential for enhancing homeland security, it could be exploited to undermine security as well. The potential for AI to be utilized by malicious actors to orchestrate sophisticated cyberattacks is now easier and more available to those who would do harm. Keeping up with these types of threats requires learning from one another. Recognizing the interconnected nature of security challenges requires education and a coordinated, proactive approach



Source: [Nathan Dumlao/Unsplash](#)

to prevention and mitigation rather than merely reacting to crises as they arise.

The necessity of higher education programs in homeland security cannot be overstated when it comes to bolstering the security of the United States. Practitioners and academics engaged in policy and strategy research enhance the effectiveness of implementing timely and successful plans within the homeland security community.



*Heather Issvoran is the director of strategic communications and interagency collaboration for the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School.*

Thankfully, numerous undergraduate and graduate homeland security education programs exist in colleges and universities across the nation, each serving as a vital component in the training of the next generation of security professionals. These programs equip students and practitioners with the requisite critical thinking, practical skills, and tools needed to address the intricacies of modern security challenges.

# Recovery – “Coming Back” After Disasters and Emergencies

By Kay C. Goss

*Recovery challenges are a key focus in 2024 for FEMA as its leadership revamps the recovery process.*

**N**atural disasters are increasing in intensity and frequency, and so is their impact. Munich Re, the worldwide reinsurance authority on coverage, disaster impacts, total damages, and recovery work, collects information from local, state, and national governments, nonprofits, and private sector organizations. Its calculation for 2023 was \$250 billion in losses globally, exceeding many countries' total gross domestic product. In 1993, when I was appointed Associate Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), that estimate was \$10 billion per year in the U.S. and \$10 billion per year for the rest of the world.

However, these formal numbers do not include many disaster impact factors. For instance, it is often difficult to estimate losses in some countries that do not have broad insurance coverage or governmental and nonprofit disaster recovery operations. The human and structural impact of broken supply chains, psychological and physical effects, losses in individual productivity, and disrupted schools, colleges, and other educational processes are challenging to estimate. So, many are underinsured or uninsured. The 2023 losses from natural disasters (categorized as geophysical, meteorological, hydrological, and climatological events) also included more than 74,000 fatalities. About 63,000 of those fatalities occurred during geophysical events like the earthquakes in Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, and Morocco, where few people had insurance coverage.

Another weakness of this data is that small disasters are not reliably reported or covered in this report. However, Munich Re seeks to secure as much information as possible to meet the increasing challenges of technology costs, expertise, and access. At the same time, small disasters add up and often have

a more devastating individual impact on communities' economies and quality of life. Increases in heat, floods, freezes, pandemics, aging populations, wars, and migration add to the difficulty of obtaining exact information worldwide.

## **Updating Processes for Managing Disasters**

In 1993, FEMA emphasized ongoing civil defense efforts to build up response activities to perceived and potential international threats. My charge was to develop pre-disaster expertise and vision for preparedness planning, training, higher education, exercises, and global outreach. However, the public and public officials looked to FEMA to be in the field immediately after a disaster to help communities make quick and complete comebacks.

FEMA leaders at that time immediately recognized the need to ramp up efforts in all four phases of disaster – mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. It was obvious that disasters were increasing, along with losses and damages that were devastating communities. Within FEMA, some people, equipment, supplies, and other resources began to shift from civil defense to other community-related efforts. FEMA's administration increased its outreach and partnerships with state and local governments to address the primary goals of governors, county executives, and city officials. Although changes were challenging, Congress was supportive as FEMA began transitioning into a more responsive agency and partnering with the National Guard to enhance its disaster responsibilities.

Faced with Midwest Flooding, North Ridge, California Earthquake, Oklahoma City Bombing, Nor'easters, and an extreme snowstorm in the Washington, D.C., area, FEMA had presidential and congressional support as it began to work toward true

partnerships with state and local governments, private sector, and nonprofits. However, the laborious, complicated recovery process would prove to be the most significant challenge over the next few decades.

### Next Phase – Revamping Recovery

Recovery challenges are a key focus in 2024 for FEMA as its leadership revamps the recovery process. By working closely with the [White House and Congress](#), FEMA aims to significantly update the process to make it more user-friendly and potentially more effective for state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector to drive successful disaster recovery efforts. These expected changes could help facilitate responsiveness and assistance based on new logical processes that are easier to understand by those struck by disasters. For example, “Individual assistance” focuses on helping private individuals and households as they begin to work through the recovery process. “Public assistance” focuses on help for state, local, territorial, and tribal governments, nonprofits, and private sector organizations.

FEMA is in the process of making the following changes and expects them to take effect on or after March 22, 2024:

- If eligibility requirements are met, the new Individual Assistance Program provides an immediate \$750 check for instant access to recovery support for “serious needs” such as immediate shelter, evacuation, and household costs.
- Displacement assistance provides applicants flexibility when making decisions about their immediate recovery needs, such as housing and funding for living accommodations. Previously, people were given travel

trailers or assigned to hotels or other lodgings for uncertain periods.

- In general, FEMA expects to reduce the “red tape.” For decades, one of the most confusing parts of the recovery process was requiring those seeking recovery assistance to apply to the Small Business Administration for loans, even if they were unincorporated businesses. They would then be turned down before receiving financial aid toward recovery for uninsured expenses.
- Another gap was assistance for underinsured survivors. The previous requirement limited assistance to a total of \$42,500, which meant no additional FEMA assistance if the survivor received \$42,500 or more from their insurance company. Under the new plan, the FEMA Disaster Recovery Fund covers up to \$42,500 *beyond* what insurance covers. In addition to \$42,500 from the Disaster Relief Fund, businesses would also be eligible for loans up to an additional \$42,500.
- FEMA’s new plan allows for mitigation coverage. Previously, disaster assistance was available only to bring back a facility to the way it was before the disaster. Updates or mitigation measures were not allowed or funded, even if they could reduce future disaster recovery costs.
- New accessibility improvements allow survivors with disabilities to make accessibility improvements to homes damaged by disasters, even if those accessibility features were not in the home before a disaster.
- More flexibility on deadlines removes the limiting provisions on late applications. Meeting strict deadlines can be challenging when families and

entities are disrupted after disasters. More flexibility reduces this challenge.

- FEMA is also streamlining the temporary housing application process and simplifying the appeals process.

## Learn More

FEMA provides online resources and will continue to update its website to facilitate a straightforward application process for disaster assistance. To follow the agency's progress and keep up on changes before being faced with the next recovery phase of a disaster, visit FEMA's website:

- [Tools to Recovery](#) – Visit this website for multilingual communication tools and ways to kickstart recovery efforts.
- [Recovery Support Functions](#) – Learn about the six Recovery Support Functions, their objectives, and the coordinating agencies for each.
- [Community Recovery Management Toolkit](#) – Search the full library of community recovery management tools, resources, and trainings.

- [Assistance for Governments and Private Non-Profits After a Disaster](#) – Find eligibility requirements for public assistance grant funding and access general information, tools, and resources to get started.
- [Individual Assistance](#) – Discover the steps individuals, households, and small businesses must take to apply for assistance.
- [Disaster Assistance](#) – Use this link to apply for assistance and track online applications. FEMA recently updated this website to speed up the application process and improve user navigation.

When struck by a disaster, survivors have many issues to consider. Resources and tools that facilitate the recovery process can help reduce the time necessary to “come back” from a crisis and make entire communities more resilient. FEMA's reform to its Disaster Assistance Program is underway. Updates FEMA has already made, combined with additional planned changes in 2024, are a significant step toward faster recovery for future events.



*Kay Goss has been the president of World Disaster Management since 2012. She is the former senior assistant to two state governors, coordinating fire service, emergency management, emergency medical services, public safety, and law enforcement for 12 years. She then served as the Associate Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Director for National Preparedness, Training, Higher Education, Exercises, and International Partnerships (presidential appointee, U.S. Senate confirmed unanimously). She was a private sector government contractor for 12 years at the Texas firm Electronic Data Systems as a senior emergency manager and homeland security advisor and SRA International's director of emergency management services. She is a senior fellow at the National Academy for Public Administration and serves as a nonprofit leader on the Board of Advisors*

*for DRONERESPONDERS International and for the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management. She has also been a graduate professor of Emergency Management at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas for 16 years, Istanbul Technical University for 12 years, the MPA Programs Metropolitan College of New York for five years, and George Mason University. She has been a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) for 25 years and a Featured International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) CEM Mentor for five years, and chair of the Training and Education Committee for six years, 2004-2010.*

# Insights From The 2024-2025 Editorial Board

Domestic Preparedness covers many hot topics related to all phases of an emergency, disaster, and large-scale special event. Issues like extreme weather, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence are constant fodder for discussion, and reasonably so. Beyond these common issues, what unique challenge(s) do Editorial Board members see in their fields that communities should be thinking about and preparing for going forward?

## **Caroline Agarabi**

*Interdisciplinary Scientist and Policy Advisor,  
Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response,  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

In the past year, the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy has called attention to the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and a lack of connection in our country. Strengthening social ties within the United States is an overlooked domestic preparedness effort that has the potential to force-multiply public health emergency preparedness and response efforts. Knowing your neighbors could save a life, potentially your own.

## **Desiree Baccus**

*Director and Chief Marketing Officer for  
Rocky Mountain Ham Radio*

Communities should recognize and amplify awareness and support for training and

amateur radio communications. Emergency preparedness professionals can establish resilient communication networks that serve as lifelines during disasters by integrating amateur radio operators' capabilities as available resources in their emergency response plans. Emphasizing the importance of ham radio in preparedness efforts can empower communities to harness this invaluable resource to help respond and recover quicker, ultimately saving lives and minimizing the impacts of future crises.

## **Raphael Barishansky**

*EMS/Public Health Consultant, RMB Consulting  
Services LLC*

I wonder how the politicization of public health seen in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic will impact public health preparedness efforts in the long run.

## **Michael Breslin**

*Director, Strategic Client Relations, Federal Law Enforcement, LexisNexis Special Services Inc.*

Among the many threats facing the Homeland, one that has peaked my attention derives from the misuse of artificial intelligence (AI) to help infiltrate our critical infrastructure, financial, and payments systems to commit fraud, cause damage, wreak havoc, sow panic and discord among the populace. Due to the ever-evolving threat landscape combined with the convergence of AI and deepfake technology, readily accessible and sophisticated cybercrime methods mean the public is more susceptible to illicit actions and must be more vigilant in its security methods and protocols.

## **Paul Cope**

*Director of the Master of Science in Homeland Security: Law and Policy Program, University of Kansas Law School*

While we often think of risks or threats as standalone, we should be prepared to react and respond to multiple incidents in a single response. Think of a cyberattack that impacts financial institutions, which then impacts citizens' ability to obtain food, or a weather event that also disables some element of critical infrastructure. We need to prepare for potential responses to very different events that may occur at the same time and place.

## **Robert DesRosier Sr.**

*Director of Disaster and Emergency Services, Blackfeet Nation*

## **Nathan DiPillo**

*Critical Infrastructure Analyst, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services*

Family preparedness is key going forward, rather than relying on the government. With radically advancing technology and

overcommunication hindered by mis- and dis-information, it is important for individuals and families to train, research, and think for themselves about how they can incorporate physical and cyber security to address today's natural and person-caused threats. Government agencies can assist by providing helpful resources.

## **Kay C. Goss**

*President, World Disaster Management*

I am a huge advocate of emergency management education on safety K-12, higher education, training, certification through CEM, exercises, collaboration, and seeking ways to strengthen our expertise and leadership at all levels, all sectors, using all media and every medium.

## **Charles J. Guddemi**

*Statewide Interoperability Coordinator, Operations Division, DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency*

Community leaders should focus on educating the emergency communications ecosystem and developing P.A.C.E. plans. It's a process, and education is continuous. If you are worrying about communications when you need them, you are too late! I will see you in the after-action report!

## **Robert C. Hutchinson**

*Director, Black Swans Consulting LLC*

After many years of ringing the pandemic warning bell, two of the most concerning national threats are serious novel bioterrorism and long-term disabling the electrical infrastructure. Other than a nuclear attack, few other threats would have the same massive impact.

## **Rhonda Lawson**

*Major, Texas Department of Public Safety*

Police officers often encounter individuals in mental health crises, necessitating specialized training and resources. Addressing these challenges involves techniques and collaborating with mental health professionals and community organizations to provide comprehensive support.

## **Joseph J. Leonard Jr.**

*Commander, U.S. Coast Guard (ret.)*

Any incident or event can easily disrupt the supply chain, whether it is local, regional, or international (just remember what one grounded container vessel in the Suez Canal did!). Transportation is Emergency Support Function-1 (ESF-1) because it ties all the other ESFs together. Likewise, the Transportation Systems Sector is one of the 16 critical infrastructure sectors for similar reasons. Those of us in the preparedness field must ensure we have the plans, training, resources, capabilities, and facilities needed to safeguard our nation's transportation networks.

## **Ann Lesperance**

*Director, Northwest Regional Technology Center at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and Northeastern University Seattle*

A few topics that interest me: (1) How to combine technology and related policies, privacy, and frameworks with the human capacity for never-ending threats to build resilient emergency managers; (2) how to integrate new technology, which brings with it ways to improve how we do things and ways to poke new and unprecedented holes in our security and defenses, into emergency management and emergency operations centers; and (3) how to identify the breaking point as emergency managers

take on increasingly complex and growing community challenges like homelessness, fentanyl, and cybersecurity.

## **Anthony S. Mangeri**

*Chief Operating Officer/Principal, Mangeri Group, LLC*

The threat of disaster at large-scale special events raises concern for issues like extreme weather and violent incidents. There is also the increasing threat of disruption to global supply networks. Communities must work with stakeholders to make these networks more resilient and plan for alternative sourcing strategies. Excessive urbanization is an emerging threat. As cities become more densely populated, the risk of large-scale incidents in congested areas increases, necessitating advanced urban planning and response strategies.

## **Sadie Martinez**

*Access and Functional Needs Coordinator, Colorado State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*

In my field, the unique challenge is the ability to move beyond labels, prepare for resource disruptions for disasters, and find a universal language when serving community members who have Functional and Access Support needs and resources.

## **Kesley Richardson**

*Adjunct Professor, Loyola University in Chicago and Nova Southeastern University*

Some unique challenges that I see in my field that impact communities are issues related to vulnerable and underserved populations. Also, cascading impacts from predisposed factors such as social determinants, systemic concerns, or emerging and evolving issues such as increasing environmental threats and

hazards and the implementation of evolving technologies.

**Tanya Scherr**

*Associate Professor in Healthcare Administration, University of Arizona*

The unique challenges I see in my field include health literacy and health misinformation. I think both of these topics require additional considerations when serving our communities and preparing for future events.

**Richard Schoeberl**

*Program Chair & Director of Graduate Studies, Criminology and Homeland Security, The University of Tennessee Southern*

As political differences and world events continue to polarize society, communities now more than ever need to be prepared to be more proactive to mass violence like acts of violent extremism and violent protests. With many communities struggling to keep law enforcement agencies fully staffed, being better prepared through proactive policing as well as reactive readiness is paramount.

**Mary Schoenfeldt**

*Board President, Green Cross Academy of Traumatology*

One of our other topics obviously is how to make sure we are taking care of ourselves so we can make the best decisions possible in high-stress environments.

**Lynda Zambrano**

*Executive Director and Founder, National Tribal Emergency Management Council*

Without a doubt, COVID-19 strongly reinforced that we, as emergency management, have not paid enough attention to food insecurity, food sovereignty, and supply chain disruptions, with special attention to medical supplies and pharmaceuticals.

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