

Our VISION:  
A Disaster  
Resistant  
University as a  
global model for  
other institutions  
of higher learning.

Our MISSION:  
To administer a  
campus-based  
comprehensive  
emergency  
management  
program in  
partnership with  
UW academic  
departments,  
operating units,  
staff, administration  
and neighboring  
jurisdictions in  
order to save lives,  
protect property  
and safeguard the  
environment.

# Disaster Digest

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## Director's Corner

Steve Charvat, UWEM Director

This past Sept. 11, I had the great honor and privilege to attend a weeklong Emergency Management Academy training course at the Department of Homeland Security's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in the rural community of Emmitsburg, Maryland. Just five miles from the Pennsylvania border and seven miles from the historic Gettysburg

Battlefield, EMI provides free emergency management training to thousands of federal, state, local and private/non-profit professionals from all 50 states and territories. Being there was an honor and the sense of history always seems to pull at my heartstrings. The pervasive proximity to so much Civil War history, coupled with the beauty of rolling hills and farmland, often makes me nostalgic for times when life was simpler and not as complicated.

The EMI campus is also home to the National Fire Academy and the National Fallen Firefighter Memorial. On the morning of Sept. 11, all faculty, staff and students across the campus took an hour to attend an outdoor ceremony recognizing and remembering the 343 brave New York City firefighters who died at the World Trade Center on that tragic morning 13 years ago. As I reflected on the speeches, joined in prayers and hymns and listened to the sound of bagpipes playing, I had time to reflect on how truly blessed I have been in my life and my almost 30-year career as an emergency manager.

As part of a larger public safety family, which includes fire, medical, law enforcement, military and allied professionals from other health and safety fields, I never cease to be amazed by the dedication, services and commitment to public service that we all share. Some of my colleagues deal with emergencies and tragedy every day. Others, as most of us in emergency management, are always training and preparing for the "big one" that we hope never happens on our watch, but must always be prepared just in case.

As the 9/11 ceremony concluded and a ray of sunshine broke through the overcast skies, I walked back to my class reenergized and recommitted with a renewed passion to learn and grow. The valuable lessons that I learn while away from campus, will ultimately benefit the entire university system. And, to top it all off, all EMI/NETC courses are totally free-of-charge courtesy of the federal government. While acceptance to these courses is quite competitive, I would encourage anybody who is interested in learning more about courses, training and options, to seek more information.

Members of the UWEM staff are here to assist our University partners in identifying appropriate emergency training. We are here to assist you and your office, all the way up to your entire unit or department, in applying and registering for these and similar courses offered nationally, statewide and locally. As I have stated many times in the past, the UW's ability to effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster lies in the increased capabilities of our entire institution – not just the three of us who work in UWEM. Now, as autumn is upon us, we turn our thoughts and planning toward winter weather. Here's hoping that mother nature is kind to all of us!

## Partner of the Quarter: Pascal Schuback



The Summer 2014 UW Emergency Management Partner of the Quarter is someone that not many people on the UW campus know yet, but definitely is someone that is already a superstar in the region. Just like other celebrities who are known by only one name (Cher, Bono, Sting, Madonna, Prince or Fabio), many disaster gurus around the region, state and nationally, know our recipient by only his first name: Pascal. Of course, his full name is Mr. Pascal Schuback, and he was unanimously selected to be our current recipient of this prestigious award. While Pascal only joined the UW in 2012, his mark has already been indelible.

Pascal is the UW's Global Emergency Manager. In this essential role, Pascal oversees and manages the ever-increasing complex program designed to protect and advise all UW students, faculty and staff who are travelling abroad.

As part of the Office of Global Affairs, Pascal performs his duties flawlessly and with a keen ability to provide superior customer service. His daily clientele are truly global in nature. From identifying UW members impacted by an overnight earthquake in Haiti, to researchers in West Africa potentially in contact with the Ebola virus, to the threat of civil unrest in Ukraine, Pascal's responsibilities run the gamut and his cell phone is never turned off. Pascal comes to the UW directly from King County Emergency Management. His unique ability to harness emergency technology solutions and keen sense of building ad-hoc collaborate teams on -the-fly, continue to provide uncounted benefits to UW community members traveling abroad. For this reason – and many others too numerous to detail here – Mr. Pascal Schuback was presented with our “Partner of Quarter” Award. Congratulations Pascal – take a bow.

## Introducing Patrick Knouff

UWEM is fortunate to have our newest intern staff member, Patrick Knouff. Patrick is completing his Master of Infrastructure Planning and Management (MIPM) in the Department of Urban Design and Planning, the same program Siri Mclean has her MA from. Patrick is also a recipient for the National Science Foundation's Scholarship for Service. Patrick is interested in business continuity and emergency management and is currently reporting to Scott Preston, who is UWEM's Business Continuity Manager. Patrick is working on projects relating to improving campus alert communications through innovative, cloud-based technologies, as well as best practices for cyber-security as it relates to business, academic and research continuity.



UWEM is excited to have Patrick on the team and so far he's proven to be a very competent and creative emergency manager-in-training. Away from school and work, Patrick is an avid soccer fan and devotee of the Sounders. He and his wife, Kendra, live in Tacoma and are expecting their first child in January (emergency management skills will serve him well as a parent.)



## Calling all UW Building Coordinators!

Building coordinators truly are the unsung heroes on the UW Seattle campus. Just like other superheroes, our coordinators are often our first-line of defense and communications when we need information, or want something fixed or adjusted.

Currently, there are more than 200 building coordinators peppered throughout the Seattle campus. Many are well-known and appreciated by their peers, others choose to be more discreet and work in the background to get the job done. Either way, we all know who they are. They also come from all walks of life on campus: administrative assistants, program coordinators, planners, analysts, supervisors... when it's too hot in your office or classroom, when the toilet in the basement ladies room won't stop running, or when you have to find out why your parking lot is being re-stripped at the same time you have a major donor coming to visit... *WHO DO YOU CALL???* Why of course your *Building Coordinator!*

In the past (2006, 2007 and 2009), the UW hosted a semi-annual **EMERGENCY SUMMIT** specifically for our building coordinators. These past events brought together over 200 of our partners to share information related to new and different emergency plans, resources and policies. Well, a lot has changed in the past five years. So, at the suggestion of the UW's Crisis Communications Committee and with the support of UW-IT, UWEM and Facilities Services, we are happy to announce and invite all UW Building Coordinators to the next Emergency Summit:

- Date:** Tuesday, October 28, 2014
- Time:** 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
- Location:** This information will be sent directly via email along with the agenda.

Even if you are not a Building Coordinator, next time you see them in the hallway, in your office or in the parking lot during your next fire drill, give them a hearty pat-on-the-back for a job well done. They truly are the glue that holds us all together. Their selfless commitment to their peers, attention to details and ability to perform these “other duties as required” in your buildings may one day save a life!

*Congratulations!*

 The word "Congratulations!" is written in a large, red, cursive font. A blue ribbon graphic starts under the word and ends in a gold starburst shape.

*By unanimous vote the Emergency Management Planning Committee (EMPC) has elected **Andy Ward** from UW IT as Chair and **Pascal Schuback** from the Office of Global Affairs as Vice Chair of the EMPC for the 2014-2015 term.*

## Semper Gumby!

If you spend more than a few minutes in the University of Washington's Emergency Operations Center you will probably hear the term *Semper Gumby*. You might also notice a few small green figures scattered around the center. For those born in the 1980s or later, this children's pop culture reference might fly right over newer generation's heads.



The match up of *semper* and *gumby* comes from two very different sources. *Semper* is most recognizably used by the United States Marine Corps in their motto *Semper Fi* which is short for *Semper Fidelis*, meaning always faithful. Gumby is the title character from *The Gumby Show* a children's stop motion clay animated series created and produced by Art Clokey in the 1950s. Gumby, like many of the characters featured in the show, is known for his plasticity due to his clay composition. He changes shape, bends, and adapts to every situation he is placed in, and consistently comes up with creative solutions to his problems. If you had to use one word to describe Gumby it would probably be flexible.

With this information in mind, *Semper Gumby* is most accurately translated as always flexible. But what does being "Always flexible," have to do with emergency management? The average day in emergency management is unpredictable. In fact, there really is no such thing as an average day. An emergency manager's day could be filled with terrorism threats, flooding, fires, special events, protests, shootings, tornadoes, and cyber attacks as well as budget meetings, conferences, business continuity planning, public presentations, policy development, and after-action reporting. An emergency manager has to be ready for anything and everything at all times. They must be prepared to deal with different types of pressure and stress at different levels of intensity.

Emergency management isn't about developing the right plan and then following it word for word after a disaster has destroyed your hometown. Disasters never happen according to plan, and it's the job of an emergency manager to recognize this and act accordingly. Creative, flexible, adaptability is what makes a good emergency manager, and is what saves the most lives and property. These qualities are essential for successful response and needed every hour of every day. Without them, emergency response can become rigid, cold hearted, and worst of all ineffective.

These skills were on display during the terrorist attacks on 9/11, when large portions of New York City were evacuated using every available water vessel in the area and when air traffic controllers had to immediately land every single plane in the United States and reroute all other flights to Canada. There wasn't a plan in place for a massive amphibious evacuation, and a national emergency air traffic landing protocol didn't exist. In fact, in the case of grounding all flights within the United States, experts agreed that creating a plan would do more harm than good.

Flexibility at all times will always be necessary in our ever-changing fast-paced world. Each day new threats and challenges arise and although past experiences and future planning is essential to a successful emergency response it will never replace the need for talented professionals who can quickly diagnose a situation and make the necessary adjustments in order to save the most lives and property. As emergency managers we must remember to be, *Semper Gumby*.

## When Going Back-Up is Really Forward Progress

The month of September was very busy for both the UW and its counterparts in the City of Seattle. Both organizations tested – for the very first time – their respective back-up emergency centers. The University of Washington’s primary Emergency Operations Center (EOC), is located in the lower level of the UW Tower. As a state-of-the-art response and recovery center, the UW’s EOC is a unique tool that allows the University to quickly and effectively respond to any type of natural, technological or human-caused disaster. It is ready 24/7 and is tested and exercised over a dozen times a year. However, what would happen if the EOC was unavailable? Well, rest assured, we have a plan for that!

The UW has always planned (at least on paper) for a variety of disaster scenarios. In the past, UWEM maintained a back-up EOC in Lander Hall. However, with the demolition of Lander Hall in 2012, the department was forced to find another home. Thanks to the continued beneficial partnership with Housing and Food Services, the UW now has identified and equipped a new back-up EOC in Poplar Hall. And, for the very first time, UWEM conducted two activation drills and exercises in its new back-up EOC on September 16 and 17. The drills provided many learning opportunities, and the University’s emergency responders are in the process of developing additional capabilities, procedures to ensure that they can effectively operate when plan B becomes a reality.

Similarly, during the same week that the UW tested its back-up EOC, the City of Seattle did the same. As a part of a longstanding partnership between the UW and the City of Seattle, the University’s EOC in the UW Tower is designated as one of the city’s backup EOCs. For the same reasons the UW has designated and tested an alternate facility, the city is doing the same. On September 15 more than 20 city officials convened in the UW’s EOC to get a feel for how they would operate in a different EOC if their primary command center in the International District was either inaccessible, damaged or destroyed. The UW can be proud of this unique partnership in which both organizations are able to share resources, information and our ability to assess and respond to disasters in our own respective backyards.



*Scott Preston facilitating Tabletop Exercise at Back-Up EOC in Poplar*



# Integrated Public Alert & Warning System

Every day it seems a new story is released detailing the evils of our increasingly interconnected world. From credit card data breaches to home refrigerators being used in botnet distributed denial-of-service attacks, we are inundated with the risks associated with all things cyber, but with these risks come extraordinary advantages.

Just one such advantage was the development and ongoing implementation of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System or IPAWS by the Federal Emergency Management Association. IPAWS is a modernization and integration of the nation's alert and warning infrastructure designed to assist alert and warning officials in providing the public with life saving information quickly and effectively during an emergency. It provides public safety officials with an effective way to alert and warn the public about serious emergencies using the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and other public alerting systems from a single interface.

Access to IPAWS is free, however, to send a message using IPAWS an organization must procure its own IPAWS compatible software. Many alerting authorities already have compatible software in place that they use for existing alerting functions.

You might ask, "Why do alerting authorities need another alerting system when they already have so many others in place?" IPAWS is the only system capable of sending a WEA message. WEA messages are location specific text-like alert messages received by mobile devices that are in close proximity to an emergency. Most mobile devices on the market today are able to receive WEA messages. The messages show the type and time of the alert, any action that should be taken, and the agency issuing the alert. The main advantage of WEA messages is that they are not subscription-dependent. It's also a significant advantage for emergency managers to be able to send an alerting message to a very specific location, potentially as specific as a few cell towers within a city.

Does all this mean WEA is tracking me? No. Just like emergency weather alerts you see on local TV, WEA messages are broadcast from cell towers to mobile devices in the area. Every WEA-capable mobile device within range receives the message. Data isn't collected on your movements and you can easily opt-out of receiving WEA messages for imminent threats and AMBER alerts by adjusting the settings on your mobile device.

IPAWS is a valuable asset when large crowds caused by sporting events, concerts, parades, etc. overwhelm the capacity of cellular networks. These messages are not affected by network congestion and supersede any other network traffic. IPAWS is the best way to send a time sensitive mass notification to every individual with a cell phone in a given geographic area, and it is ideal for active shooter scenarios, mass evacuations, hazardous material spills, and many other emergency scenarios.

For more Information please visit

<http://www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system>

<http://www.fema.gov/wireless-emergency-alerts>



# Simian Flu: Fiction Enhanced by Reality

If you've seen either of the most recent *Planet of the Apes* movies you may have noticed some eerie similarities between some of the significant plot lines in the movies and recent local and international news. Both sets of media are filled with stories of dangerous and often deadly diseases that are transmitted easily from one victim to the next with devastating consequences. Techniques used in preventing spread of the fictional Simian Flu are also beneficial in preventing the spread of disease in our non-fictional world.

In the movies, Simian Flu, formerly known as ALZ-112 and ALZ-113, is an artificially created retrovirus designed by Dr. Will Rodman. Dr. Rodman's research reveals that ALZ-112 greatly increases the intelligence of non-human primates and he speculates that it may be a viable cure for Alzheimer's disease. However, after testing the cure on his own father, Dr. Rodman discovers that it only provides temporary relief to Alzheimer's patients. Eventually he creates ALZ-113 hoping to make the effects of the cure permanent. The new strain, ALZ-113 utilizes a more powerful and contagious strain of virus, which has similar effects on non-human primates but ultimately proves lethal to humans. During early testing on non-human primates, the flu is accidentally released into the general population and then transported globally through the airline industry causing a pandemic. Simultaneously, the virus is spread artificially and naturally through the non-human primate population causing an evolutionary acceleration, which sets the stage for a prolonged human and ape conflict.

In *Planet of the Apes*, the fictional Simian Flu is spread through the air and by direct and indirect contact. Only one out of every 10 individuals who contract the disease survives. In the first 48 hours, symptoms include severe headache, sore throat, weakness, fever and joint pain. At 98 hours patients exhibit nausea, vomiting, red eyes, raised rash, chest pain and cough. At seven days patients experience stomach pain, severe weight loss, and bleeding from nose, mouth and eyes.

Simian Flu has uncanny similarities with the many real life diseases, such as Ebola, the Avian Flu (H5N1) and the Swine Flu (H1N1). The fictional flu spread to others relatively easily through similar transmission patterns, such as direct contact. The Simian Flu also had an extremely low survival rate and hemorrhagic fever, similar to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa today.

Although the Simian Flu isn't real, understanding how a disease spreads and what you can do to prevent infection can help in the upcoming flu season. In general, when a disease is spreading, individuals should wear a mask if possible, minimize physical contact with other individuals, avoid public spaces when sick, wash hands regularly and maintain a clean living environment.

For more information about the fictional Simian Flu, and the spread of disease please visit.

<http://www.simianflu.com/us/#!/the-simian-flu-and-you>

<http://www.cdc.gov>

**THE SIMIAN FLU:  
KNOW THE SYMPTOMS**

**48 HOURS**

- Severe Headache
- Sore Throat
- Weakness
- Fever
- Joint Pain

**96 HOURS**

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Red Eyes
- Raised Rash
- Chest Pain/Cough

**07 DAYS**

- Stomach Pain
- Severe Weight Loss
- Bleeding from Nose, Mouth, Rectum and Eyes

Visit [SimianFlu.com](http://www.simianflu.com) to learn more

**HOW IT SPREADS**

Airborne

Direct Contact

Indirect Contact

# The Husky ShakeOut



Shake, rattle and roll...well that is somewhat how it felt. This summer the world's largest mobile earthquake simulator known as the [Big Shaker](#) visited the UW Seattle campus. The simulator re-creates the intense shaking of earthquakes up to a magnitude 8.0.

While inside, participants can experience what an earthquake can feel like and what will happen to unsecured items. Loss or damage to household possessions and personal injuries in an earthquake are predictable and preventable. The Big Shaker is specifically designed to show people how to prevent damage and injuries from happening.



During the month of August the Big Shaker traveled to Washington from its home in California for a road show across our state. The UW was fortunate to be one of the locations it visited. Once the dates were set, UW Emergency Management worked to create an entire event around earthquake awareness for the UW Community; they launched the Husky Shakeout.

UWEM partnered with the [UW Police Department](#) and [Environmental Health & Safety](#) to provide education about security and fire safety after an earthquake, [Pacific Northwest Seismic Network](#) to provide education about the science around earthquakes in the northwest, the [American Red Cross](#) and [Prepare Smart](#) sharing examples of basic emergency supply kits and [Thrive](#) providing education about some alternate emergency food options.

The first ever Husky Shakeout was a huge success with over 500 people from the community attending and learning more about the importance of personal preparedness.



A yellow promotional graphic with the text "I SURVIVED THE BIG SHAKER" and "WORLD'S LARGEST MOBILE EARTHQUAKE SIMULATORS". It features the "BIG SHAKER ENTERPRISES, LLC." logo and two inset photos: one showing items falling from a shelf and another showing the simulator truck.

# Get Ready to ShakeOut!

With 6.8 million people living and working in Washington, a major earthquake could cause unprecedented devastation. What we do now, before a big earthquake, will determine what our lives will be like afterward. With earthquakes an inevitable part of Washington's future, we must act quickly to ensure that disasters do not become catastrophes.

The Great Washington ShakeOut in October 2014 will involve hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians through a broad-based outreach program, media partnerships and public advocacy by hundreds of partners. The drill will be held statewide annually on the third Thursday of October, which falls this year on **October 16 at 10:16 a.m.**

A key aspect of the Great ShakeOut is the integration of comprehensive science-based earthquake research and the lessons learned from decades of social science research about why people get prepared. The result is a teachable moment on par with having an actual earthquake (often followed by increased interest in getting ready for earthquakes). The Great ShakeOut creates the sense of urgency that is needed for people, organizations, and communities to get prepared, to practice what to do to be safe, and to learn what plans need to be improved.

Not just any drill will accomplish this; it needs to be big. It must inspire communities to come together. It must involve children at school and parents at work, prompting conversations at home. It must allow every organization, city, etc., to make it their own event.

The 2014 Great ShakeOut drill will be the largest preparedness event in U.S. history. All organizers ask is that participants at the minimum practice "drop, cover, and hold on" at the specified time. It is only a five-minute commitment for something that can save your life. For more information, visit [www.ShakeOut.org/washington](http://www.ShakeOut.org/washington).



*Siri McLean & Steve Charvat, UWEM  
Practicing Drop, Cover & Hold during 2012 Drill*

## HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

*The University of Washington has registered as a state participant in this drill. However it is up each department to coordinate their own participation in this drill. Feel free to contact UW Emergency Management at [disaster@uw.edu](mailto:disaster@uw.edu) with questions or needing assistance.*

### Plan Your Drill:

- Make the commitment in your department, school or home to have a "Drop, Cover and Hold On" drill at 10:16 a.m. on October 16.
- Download a Drill Broadcast recording from <http://www.shakeout.org/washington/drill/broadcast/>
- Discuss what you learned and make improvements.

### Get Prepared for Earthquakes:

- Do a "hazard hunt" for items that might fall during earthquakes and secure them.
- Create a personal disaster plan.
- Organize or refresh your emergency supply kits.
- Learn more about earthquake hazards: <http://www.washington.edu/emergency/hazards/earthquake>



# No W(h)ining: August Napa Earthquake



The sight of oak wine barrels toppled and cracked open as a sea of red wine floods the concrete floor is something I never want to see again. All that precious and delicious wine wasted and destroyed because of an earthquake and the lack of mitigation efforts.

On Sunday, August 24 at 3:20 a.m. a 6.0 earthquake struck six miles southwest of Napa, California's famed wine country. The jolt knocked 900-pound wine barrels from racks, damaged winery buildings and warehouses, and smashed bottles of the very-best.

About 120 wineries suffered an estimated \$80 million in damage including not only the barrels and bottles of wine, but damage to the machinery, supplies irrigation and piping infrastructure. The damages will cost some vineyards a delayed harvest, thus costing them this year's revenue.

Earthquakes are inevitable and unpredictable, but the damage caused by earthquakes doesn't have to be devastating. Every \$1 invested in disaster preparedness can prevent \$7 worth of disaster-related economic losses. We can't prevent the earthquakes from happening, but we can prevent or alleviate the damages caused by earthquakes.

I think I have discovered a new career for myself. There seems to be a need for earthquake mitigation at wineries. Perfect! I can combine my love for earthquake preparedness and saving all that delicious wine! Washington is the next highest risk for earthquakes after California.

-Siri McLean, Plans and Training Manager





## Triangle of Life: Bad Information

Every time an earthquake makes the news, such as the recent August 25 Napa Valley earthquake, a misleading earthquake safety concept developed by Doug Copp called the *Triangle of Life* gets re-circulated in email and social media by well-meaning, but misinformed people.

The concept is based on flawed assumptions about how earthquakes and the seismic waves from them behave. In a 2006 paper by Dr. Marla Petal of the Earthquake Research Institute's Disaster Preparedness Education Program entitled *The Need for An Evidence-Basis for Earthquake Survival Tips*, the Triangle of Life myths are refuted in a point by point analysis. Here are a few of the Triangle of Life myths addressed:

**Void Space.** The myth is that void spaces in a structural collapse following an earthquake can be anticipated. The reality is that there are too many variables regarding earthquake forces and building construction to know and accurately anticipate where such spaces may occur.

**Non-Structural Threats.** The myth is that it is the building, rather than the items in the building, that represents the greatest threat. The reality is that it is not the building, but non-structural elements (stuff inside the building) that presents the greatest threat to the occupants. This is true of most modern buildings around the world. This is why dropping to the floor, seeking cover under a sturdy object and holding on to that object is the best way to protect yourself indoors during an earthquake.

**Stay in Bed or Stay in the Car.** The myth is that you should roll out of bed and crouch near it or exit your vehicle and crouch near it for protection. The reality is the safest place is to remain in bed with a pillow to protect your head, or stay in your vehicle if the earthquake occurs while driving.

Dr. Petal's article goes into great detail about some of the outrageous errors and half-truths that are used to support to the Triangle of Life.

### The best earthquake response

The best response during an earthquake is still to **drop** to the floor, seek **cover** under a sturdy piece of furniture and **hold** on to that furniture. Once the shaking has stopped, wait 30 seconds to allow for any debris that is going to fall before evaluating whether exiting the building is necessary.



# Leadership Lessons from a Disaster Area

*Written for the UWIT Leadership Blog by Alisa Hata*

I have been living in a federally-declared disaster area for much of the past month. It has been tense, heart-breaking and difficult, but I have also learned a lot, especially about leading during emergencies and disasters. I have been reminded that sometimes the worst of times provide my most valuable leadership lessons.

For the past fifteen years, my refuge - my escape from the stress and clatter of my life in Seattle - has been my family's vacation house in the Methow Valley, set on just under two acres of pine, aspen, and cottonwood trees with a touch of shrub-steppe habitat thrown in.

The last six weeks have been anything but stress free. We've had lightning storms, fire storms, wind storms, mud slides, and floods. Over a quarter of a million acres and more than 320 homes have been destroyed by the largest wildfire in Washington's history; floods and mudslides have destroyed another 10 homes and closed two of the three main roads into the valley; a freakishly short but severe windstorm downed hundreds of trees in the valley, damaging more homes including some that had barely escaped a 500 acre, human-caused fire the day before and once again taking out power to much of the upper valley. Out-of-control wildfires, smoke-filled air, flash floods, evacuations, gas shortages, extended power outages, disruptions to cell and 911 service, closed roads and limited access have all plagued the Methow Valley at various times since the middle of July.

Through all of this chaos and tragedy, residents have come together to help each other, and two national incident management teams have taken their turns at leading incident response. Watching these highly trained and experienced incident management teams from afar has been particularly instructive. Here is some of what I learned from them:

**Make sure health and safety always come first.** These experienced teams clearly and unambiguously prioritized safety, even when it angered local citizens who wanted help RIGHT NOW to save their land. I heard fire fighters in town remind each other to "stay safe out there," saw references to "safety first" in communications from the incident management team, and often read in the daily planning updates about evaluating conditions in terms of crew safety. They made sure personnel had enough rest, food, and water, and after 14 days, each team was required to rotate out to take a break. While it seems obvious that health and safety concerns come first, in the midst of an outage or emergency with pressure from citizens (or customers), it's easy to forget, but the consequences of forgetting can be disastrous. These experts never lost sight of the critical importance of the welfare of team members.

**Collect good situational information** and share it broadly. These national interagency teams included weather specialists, GIS professionals, fire analysts, and other experts, who regularly gathered data about all aspects of the situation and environment. I saw photos of fire behavior analysts during the daily 6 a.m. briefings giving updates, and I especially appreciated when the Public Information Officers (PIOs) from the Rocky Mountain Incident Management Team posted the nightly infrared maps of the fire. The daily information provided about weather was also some of the best I have ever seen. The incident team used situational information to help keep people safe as well as to decide how best to attack the fire. Sharing it broadly also helped civilians know what was going on and kept everyone calmer and safer.

**Have contingency plans and the ability to respond quickly to changing conditions.** Even with excellent situational information, unexpected things happen, or you might miscalculate. In the case of the first type 1 team, an accidentally caused fire (from sparks triggered by a flat tire on a trailer) came within ½ mile of their Incident Command Post (ICP) located on the grounds of the local high school. Night-shift fire fighters had to be roused, the situation had to be evaluated, the ICP had to be secured, and everyone had to pitch in to fight the fire. Fortunately, the proximity of these incredibly experienced fire-fighting resources and their ability to respond quickly to a new emergency limited the loss to 10 homes. The second type 1 team moved their ICP (I assume because the high school needed to start getting ready for the start of school by that time), but despite their knowledge of rain and terrain, their ICP was flooded and one of their crew was stranded from their team during the flash flooding. They kept everyone safe and quickly re-established operations. They had back-up plans for continuing operations, and they knew how to use their command structure and practices to respond quickly.

**Communicate, communicate, communicate** and use multiple channels. Local residents, in the midst of the chaos and uncertainty of what was happening, were desperate for knowledge, but more often than not during the most critical times, communication technologies - including phone, internet, radio, and cell service – were inoperable. Public Information Officers posted hard copy updates on boards in more than a dozen locations around the valley. The Incident Commanders – in addition to holding daily 6 a.m. briefings with all the folks fighting the fires – held community meetings to update residents and answer questions. They updated the national incident website daily, and used other electronic means including Facebook and blogs as much as possible. Official updates were also published in Spanish. And I know that good communication between the incident management team and firefighters was an even higher priority in order to effectively fight the fire and keep everyone safe.

Here are a few additional lessons from a more personal view:

**Be prepared.** Our longest power outage was seven days and 19 hours, which meant no lights, no way to store perishable food or cook, and no water for drinking, bathing, or flushing toilets for over a week. The rest of the valley suffered a power outage for just as long, and in some cases much longer. A three-day emergency supply is a good place to start, but in a bad disaster (think Hurricane Katrina) you will need even more.

**Identify safety zones.** Preparation involves more than just supplies, it's also important to have plans in place for dealing with the unexpected. Wildland firefighters always have a safety zone to which they can retreat if conditions change. Even the Incident Command Posts had back-up locations in case they were needed. We did too. We evacuated to our home in Seattle when the Carlton Complex fire jumped the line east of us at the same time two new fires were burning, one to the south and one to the north of us. Every leader should also have safety zones, both physical locations from which to operate in a disaster, as well as trusted networks of colleagues to whom they can turn to for help in times of need.

All the fires in the Methow Valley are now 100% contained, power is back, and tourists are returning. Wildlife is returning as well, and tiny plants are already springing up in some places ravaged by the fires. The valley is forever changed, and so am I. I've learned a lot, some of it painful, but – as is often the case during difficult times – much of it is useful as well.

Do you have stories and leadership lessons from living through crises and disaster? If so, please consider sharing them with us!

# Continuity Corner

## Earthquake Mat Saves HFS \$\$\$



In collaboration with UW Emergency Management, the Department of Housing & Food Services (HFS) identified point of sale registers in UW Dining facilities, desks, and the Husky Card Office as high value assets that could be mitigated through non-structural means with relatively little investment.

HFS has approximately 105 point of sale systems deployed in the field throughout 33 different campus locations. At a cost of approximately \$4,000 per register, a total value of \$420,000 in assets that were previously vulnerable to earthquake damage has been protected against loss through mitigation.

The simple solution of placing an earthquake mat underneath each register cost a total of \$1,260 in supplies and 10 labor hours for an HFS Facilities Services and Planning staff member will provide a significant return on investment should we experience an earthquake. This return on investment is estimated by UWEM to be approximately 99.70 %. While this is an usually favorable ratio, it does serve to illustrate the value of mitigation as a preferred planning strategy over recovery.

The installation is halfway done at this point and will be completed by the end of September.

For more information in planning for disruption in your unit or department visit the [BARC website](#).





October: Fire Safety

When it comes to fire – *be smart!* If the fire is too big for you to handle, immediately get out of the house. Don't stop to gather anything or to do anything. Once you are outside, stay outside. Intense heat and toxic fumes can kill you.

November: Shelter in Place

Your house provides a good first-layer barrier against chemical airborne agents. Additional protection is achieved by tightly sealing one room of your home that you have pre-designated and prepared. A safe room is one that easily and quickly can be sealed to protect you from airborne agents, and that has a few supplies to get you through the hours that you will need to stay inside it. All doors and windows of that room will be sealed with plastic sheeting and tape, and dampened towels or cloths will be placed under the doors. You will probably need to stay inside several hours, but not several days. So, choose a room that can accommodate your needs for several hours. A master bedroom with an attached bathroom is ideal to give you access to the toilet and running water.

December: Home Hazard Hunt

All of Washington has the potential of being impacted by a major earthquake. Earthquakes strike suddenly and without warning. When they occur, they cause the ground to undulate and shake, perhaps violently. Buildings – and their contents – are vulnerable to this rocking and rolling. Fortunately, experts teach how to secure homes to their foundations, and contents to wall studs.

*HELP WANTED! UW Emergency Management is always looking for volunteers to be trained and ready to work in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) upon activation. If you are interested in learning more about this wonderful opportunity please email: [disaster@uw.edu](mailto:disaster@uw.edu)*

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