



The CENTER For DISASTER RESEARCH & EDUCATION Biannual Newsletter

Fall 2016/Spring 2017

AMS Conference Review

The Center for Disaster Research & Education (CDRE) and Millersville University's Master of Science in Emergency Management (MSEM) Program were represented by CDRE Director (Dr. Sepi Yalda) and MSEM student (Andrew Yarosh) at the 97th Annual Meeting of the American Meteorological Society (AMS) from January 22-January 26, 2017 in Seattle, Washington. The theme of the conference was "Observations Lead the Way" and over 4,400 scientists, educators, students, and other professionals from across the weather, water, and climate community attended the conference. Andrew Yarosh represented the MSEM program as a part of the Career Fair and Graduate School Reception during the AMS Student Conference of the annual meeting.

Sepi Yalda and Jeff Jumper, PA State Meteorologist, presented a poster based on the collaborative work of the Central PA Integrated Weather Impacts Team (IWIT) which is comprised of key partners in Central Pennsylvania that are involved in the preparedness and response to significant hazardous weather events. IWIT functions as a multi-sector/cross-disciplinary collaboration between the National Weather Service (State College Office) and its partners and aims to sustain a transactional communication synergy amongst these stakeholders - with an emphasis on improving the usefulness of forecast and warning information for impact-based decision making. By developing new partnerships and

strengthening existing relationships across different sectors of the weather enterprise, the team aims to gain a better understanding of external users' needs while providing a conduit for feedback to assess areas where the NWS products and services can be enhanced. The ultimate goal is to enable users to better exploit forecast and warning information in order to become ready, responsive and resilient to extreme weather threats.



To date, IWIT has held two successful workshops (the first at State College and the second at Millersville University) which focused on assessing and evaluating current products and the dissemination and communication procedures of impact-based weather risk and safety information. By developing new partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships across different sectors of

the weather enterprise in Central Pennsylvania, IWIT has and continues to gain a better understanding of the roles, needs and challenges that each sector faces in effectively utilizing and communicating weather and safety information. The IWIT workshops participants have included participants from across the weather enterprise including but not limited to: emergency management, public safety, media and communications, education, transportation, energy, health/medical, social scientists and others.

Going forward, the team will continue to emphasize risk communication and look for areas where impact-based decision support services can be developed or improved to enhance readiness and resilience to high impact weather events. The next IWIT meeting and workshop will be held in late June at the new PEMA headquarters in Harrisburg, PA. Additionally, IWIT will host a special workshop at the annual PEMA conference in October 2017. IWIT is part of the National Weather Service's Weather-Ready Nation program that aims to build community resilience. You can find more information about Weather-Ready Nation [HERE](#).

MU Community Pledges to Prepare

On Tuesday, September 20, 2016 Millersville University (MU) Community learned more about disaster preparedness and how each person can help others prepare for the unexpected. Around 200 students, faculty and staff engaged with many organizations and professionals in the local, state, and national public safety sectors.

"I came because I heard there was free food, but I was really surprised to find how interesting each booth was. I learned a lot and really enjoyed myself," said an MU student.

Many students commented on how much they enjoyed learning more about disasters and emergencies. Students were able to tour the MU Police Department's mobile command vehicle and a fire engine from Blue Rock Fire Department.



The 3rd annual Preparedness Day was sponsored by the Center for Disaster Research and Education (CDRE). Preparedness Day is held every 3rd Tuesday in September in recognition of the National Preparedness Month. During September many national, state, and local public safety agencies and organizations promote preparedness for natural and man-made hazards.

"Students were able to improve their knowledge regarding preparedness, and will spread this new

knowledge to friends and family. The ultimate goal is to relieve the burden from emergency personal when a disaster strikes as they are often outnumbered and overwhelmed due to so many individuals requiring assistance. By holding events like Preparedness Day, together we are taking a step in the right direction towards our campus community being ready for the next emergency," said Andrew Yarosh, event organizer and graduate assistant at CDRE.

Organizations represented at the event included: Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Weather Service - State College, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Lancaster Emergency Management Agency, Blue Rock Fire Department, MU Police Department, MU [Center for Disaster Research and Education](#), [MU Student Chapter of the International Association of Emergency Managers](#), MU Student Chapter of the American Meteorological Society, MU Student Chapter of the American Society of Safety Engineers, and Community Emergency Response Team.

Blue Rock Fire Department, Turkey Hill, and Utz Quality Foods donated food and drinks. The University Book Store, CDRE, and Duane Hagelgans donated prizes for the prize drawing.

CDRE Designs and Conducts Local Tabletop Exercise

The Center for Disaster Research and Education (CDRE) coordinated and facilitated a tabletop exercise for West Lampeter Township, Pennsylvania. Discussions about the exercise began in early 2016. Students and faculty worked to develop the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) compliant exercise and scenario for the Township. Undergraduate and graduate students were able to gain valuable experience while developing and writing the scenario and exercise structure.

The tabletop exercise was conducted on October 4, 2016 at the West Lampeter Municipal Building and was facilitated by Dr. Duane Hagelgans. Andrew Yarosh and Chris Soelle, graduate assistants at the CDRE, were on hand to evaluate the exercise participants based on their pre-existing plans



and national guidance. The exercise scenario designed for the West Lampeter Township officials focused on a severe weather situation that impacted the dense population center in the Township. Many of the participants commented on the positive benefits of the exercise and the value of having an opportunity to practice as a group and be better prepared for a disaster.

“At the Center for Disaster Research and Education our goal is to do as much community outreach as possible to better assist our nation’s citizens,” said Hagelgans. “In conducting these activities, we also assist our students in their educational process. The exercise provided tremendous benefits to all who participated!” West Lampeter Township is a township southeast of Lancaster, PA in central Lancaster County. The township is home to roughly 15,000 residents. More information about the township can be found [HERE](#).

Millersville Student Wins IAEM Scholarship

Chris Soelle, a second year Master of Science in emergency management (MSEM) student was recently announced as a recipient of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) Graduate Student Scholarship. Soelle was awarded \$1,500 and was recognized at the 64th Annual IAEM Conference in Savannah, Georgia. The application consisted of two essays, resume, and letters of reference.



“It was an honor to receive this scholarship from IAEM,” said Soelle. “I’m really thankful to those individuals that wrote letters of reference on my behalf. Not only did those individuals provide kind words but they also have provided me with amazing opportunities in the past.”

The mission of the IAEM scholarship program is to assist the profession by identifying and developing students with the intellect and technical skills that can advance and enhance

emergency management. Each year the Scholarship Committee awards scholarships to graduate and undergraduate students. Applications are usually due in May. The number of awards varies every year. To learn more about the IAEM scholarship click [HERE](#).

Soelle was exposed to emergency management during his undergraduate studies in atmospheric science at the University of Missouri. He continued to explore emergency management in 2014 with an internship with the National Weather Service – Chicago where he worked on developing a WeatherReady school program. In 2015 Soelle completed a Pathways internship with FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama. These two internship experiences solidified his desire to pursue a career in emergency management and help the public and organizations prepare for hazards.

64th Annual IAEM Conference Review

The Center for Disaster Research & Education (CDRE) and Millersville University's Master of Science in Emergency Management (MSEM) Program were represented at the 64th Annual International Association of Emergency Management (IAEM) Conference from October 14th to October 19, 2016 in Savannah, Georgia. The theme of this year's conference was "Working in a Complex World."



Director of CDRE and Coordinator for the MSEM Program, Dr. Sepideh Yalda, along with Emergency Management Professor, Dr. Duane Hagelgans, were accompanied by CDRE graduate assistants Chris Soelle and Andrew Yarosh three undergraduate student members of Millersville University's IAEM Student Chapter Jessica Stokes, Katie Prichard, and Jon Beuerle, also attended the conference. The group participated in promoting the program as a part of the Emergency Management and Homeland Security Expo (EMEX). The CDRE/MSEM

booth had an impressive number of visitors including individuals that shared positive feedback regarding the program.

In addition to representing the CDRE and MSEM Program at the EMEX Booth, the faculty and students attended a number of talks led by professionals in the field of emergency management. There were a number of sessions covering the topics of planning, preparedness, response, recovery, and the "all hazards" approach. During the conference Chris Soelle was honored as a recipient of the IAEM Graduate Student Scholarship and received 1st place in the Academic Research Poster Competition. We are looking forward to the next conference in November 2017 taking place in Long Beach, California.

Student's Research Poster wins 1st Place

Chris Soelle won 1st place in the poster competition at the 64th Annual International Association of Emergency Management (IAEM) that was held in Savannah, GA October 14th through the 19th. Soelle is a second year graduate student in the Master of Science in emergency management program and a graduate assistant at the Center for Disaster Research and Education.

His research is on the practice of naming winter storms and the sharing of hazardous weather information on Twitter. Soelle collected tens of thousands of tweets from the 2015-2016 winter season. He analyzed these tweets to determine what types of information Twitter users are sharing and who these users are. Dr. Sepi Yalda, a professor of meteorology, coordinator of the Millersville's Master of Science in emergency management program, and director of the Center for Disaster Research and Education is Soelle's research advisor.



“There’s many great preparedness, response, and recovery information on social media and initial results suggest emergency managers are not actively involved in this conversation. This could be a missed opportunity to reach this audience,” states Soelle.

In 2012 The Weather Channel (TWC) began naming winter storms in an effort to increase hazardous weather awareness. In 2015, the federal weather agency in the United Kingdom (UK Met

Office) started a trial period of naming winter storms that affected their nation and neighboring Ireland. The UK Met Office has cited public safety and the ability to reach new audiences as the reasons for naming winter storms.

“The UK Met Office starting to name winter storms really spurred my interest in this topic,” said Soelle. “Here in the US, TWC is the only weather organization naming winter storms nationally and other organizations/agencies have been openly opposed to this practice. These same opposition organizations respect and admire the UK Met Office. So the UK Met Office naming winter storms has really made people pause and reevaluate their position on the practice.”

The Annual Academic Poster Competition included other graduate and undergraduate students in emergency management programs from around the country. Participants were evaluated on poster content, visual display, and oral presentation/discussion.

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