

## Disaster Response

(by Jessica Lawson in MilitaryTimesEDGE magazine)

Nothing says job security like global insecurity. With disasters constantly in the news, it's no wonder emergency management was rated one of U.S. News & World Report's best jobs of 2011.

Emergency managers are expected to enjoy tremendous job growth in their field for the foreseeable future, with employment predicted to rise by 22 percent between 2008 and 2018, much faster than the average career field, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Emergency managers differ from first responders such as police and firefighters. Whether it's a flood or fire, oil spill or act of terrorism, emergency managers work behind the scenes to make that response possible.

Emergency managers have to be skilled in mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, said Air Force Col. N. Thomas Greenlee, division chief for medical operations, plans and strategic health engagement for U.S. Pacific Command. He also heads the International Association of Emergency Managers' certifying commission. Those skills come from both education and on-the-job experience, and employers increasingly prefer candidates with IAEM's Certified Emergency Manager certification (<http://www.iaem.com/certification/generalinfo/cem.htm>).

### 'The gold standard'

While a CEM certification is not mandatory for employment in the field, more and more upper-level emergency manager positions are requiring it, Greenlee said.

IAEM and the Federal Emergency Management Agency created the CEM program in 1993. Administered by IAEM, the certification is a peer review process that recognizes education, skills and achievements in the emergency management field.

"You should [look at] the peer review process just like a doctor or nurse getting certified," Greenlee said. "You've had your peers look at your record and say, 'Yes, this person is competent.'"

Requirements are strict. According to IAEM, those seeking CEM certification must have:

- Emergency management experience. Three years by date of application, to include participation in a full-scale exercise or disaster.
- Three professional references. One must be a current supervisor.
- Education. A bachelor's degree in any subject area.
- Training. This includes 100 hours in emergency management training and 100 hours in general management training.
- Contributions to the profession. This may include publishing articles, serving on boards or committees, and professional memberships.

Applicants also must write an essay and pass a multiple-choice exam.

Those who are certified do not have to be members of IAEM.

The CEM certification is good for five years, at which time a person must be recertified. There are fewer requirements for recertification, Greenlee said.

### No degree? No problem

Interested in the CEM certification but don't have a college degree? Go for the Associate Emergency Manager certification, Greenlee advises. That certification doesn't require experience or professional contributions, and it's also good for five years.

If you earn your AEM, you can upgrade to a CEM certification at any time during the five years, provided you meet the additional requirements, Greenlee said.

### Other certifications?

While the CEM is the premier certification in emergency management, other certifications are out there — some reputable, others not, Greenlee said.

For example, many states certify emergency managers, Greenlee said. Other certifications are reputable but focus on specific niches, such as the Certified Business Continuity Professional credential from the Disaster Recovery Institute.

Unfortunately, "there are some other organizations out there where you just fill out a checklist and send in a check, and that organization gives you" a certification, Greenlee said. "It's more 'pay to get what you want.' It's not peer review."

The problem with those?

"We saw with [Hurricane] Katrina what happens when emergency management goes badly," Greenlee said. "We want to make sure the people we certify are quality people who can go out and lead an emergency response."

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