

THE EMERGENCY CONNECTION

JANUARY 2025

As we step into a new year, we're reminded that preparedness isn't just about supplies, plans and tools it's about people. In times of disaster, the strength of a community is rooted in the connections we forge and the support we provide to one another. Strong relationships are the foundation of effective community preparedness, and 2025 presents us with exciting opportunities to forge new connections and strengthen existing ones. This year, let's prioritize relationships as the cornerstone of readiness, because preparedness is not a matter of if a disaster will occur, but when.

When disasters strike, it's the strength of our relationships that enables a swift and coordinated response. Whether it is neighbors checking on one another, businesses stepping up to provide resources, or local agencies working together, relationships are the glue that holds communities together during challenging times. But these connections don't form overnight and sometimes not quickly. They require intention, effort, and a shared commitment to building trust and collaboration. This year, let's focus on fostering these bonds before an emergency arises, so we are ready to stand together when it matters most. Here are some ways we can work together to strengthen relationships and bolster community preparedness in the year ahead:

- Expand Community Outreach - host open forums and workshops where residents and community members can learn about local risks, resources, and preparedness strategies.
- Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships - local businesses play a critical role in emergency response and recovery so spend time discussing mutual aid opportunities.
- Empower Neighborhood Networks - encourage neighbors to connect through programs like Neighborhood Watch.
- Engage with Vulnerable Populations - collaborate with organizations that serve seniors, individuals with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged populations.
- Leverage Technology - utilize social media and digital platforms to share preparedness information, promote events, and stay connected with the community in real-time.

Remember, disasters don't discriminate they impact us all. Building and maintaining relationships is a vital step toward ensuring that no one faces an emergency alone. By working together, we create communities that are not only prepared but also more compassionate and connected. Take time this year to meet your neighbors, introduce yourself to local first responders, and consider volunteering with a local nonprofit or emergency organization.

As we embark on this journey into 2025, let's remember that preparedness is a shared responsibility. Each of us has a role to play in building a resilient community. Take the first step today by reaching out to someone in your community. Together, we'll be ready for whatever comes next, because when we work together we are stronger and ready for whatever challenges come our way.

It's not if, but when!

The Founding Vision of FEMA

With the recent death of President Jimmy Carter it is appropriate to reflect on the evolution of emergency management in the United States as his administration was instrumental in the creation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), an organization that has since become a cornerstone of the nation's emergency response and disaster recovery efforts. Prior to FEMA, disaster response in the United States was fragmented, with multiple federal agencies handling different aspects of emergencies. This decentralized approach often led to inefficiencies, miscommunication, and delayed responses.



FEMA

In 1979, President Carter issued **Executive Order 12127**, officially creating FEMA. The new agency consolidated responsibilities from several federal agencies providing a more cohesive and effective response to disasters, both natural and man-made. President Carter also championed the importance of preparedness and mitigation in emergency management. He believed that FEMA should not only respond to disasters but also work to reduce the risk of them in the future through proactive planning and education. This forward thinking approach has shaped FEMA's mission and operations for over four decades. His vision set the stage for development of a modern agency capable of addressing the complexities of contemporary emergencies, from ice storms and tornadoes to terrorism.

As we continue to face new and evolving challenges, it is worth remembering President Carter's pivotal role in laying the foundation for FEMA. His leadership and foresight remind us of the importance of collaboration, preparedness, and resilience in safeguarding our communities. Today, FEMA stands as a testament to his enduring legacy, a legacy built on the principle that by building strong relationships together, we are stronger in the face of adversity.

Crisis Communications - Reaching Teens and Young Adults

Crisis communications, simply put, is the theory and application of how organizations share critical information about emergent situations. When a crisis strikes, effective communication saves lives. But how do you ensure your message reaches teens and young adults, a demographic often glued to their phones yet flooded with digital noise?



Generational differences show up in unique and unexpected ways every day. However, generalizations are not accurate for everyone within any generation. Studies reveal common characteristics that can assist agencies and organizations in developing more effective crisis communication plans for the entire community. Some proven strategies include:

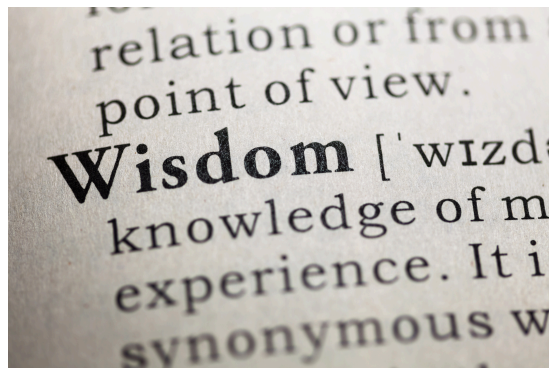
- Be authentic - young audiences value transparency and authenticity so establish trust before the first alert.
- Meet them where they are - use social media platforms popular with those you are trying to reach.
- Utilize peer influence - partner with youth leaders who can amplify your message.
- Make it visible - infographics, short videos, and memes can make critical information more memorable.

By tailoring your crisis communications to the habits and preferences of teens and young adults, you'll not only capture their attention but also empower them to act.

Wisdom of Preparedness: Knowledge vs Experience

In the world of emergency management, the debate between knowledge and experience has been ongoing. Although closely related they are both distinct concepts, and their interplay forms the foundation for the wisdom of preparedness. Let's dive into this intriguing conversation and explore the unique strengths of each:

Knowledge is the foundation upon which we build our understanding. It's the accumulation of information, theories, and expertise that helps us navigate our work. A strong educational background or continuous learning can set the stage for success. However, knowledge alone might lack practical application. Experience, on the other hand, is the real-world laboratory where we test and refine our knowledge. It's the crucible of learning, where we encounter challenges, make mistakes, and adapt. Practical experience is invaluable because it bridges the gap between theory and application, turning knowledge into wisdom.



In emergency preparedness, knowledge provides the "what" and "why", while experience informs the "how". Knowledge equips individuals with the foresight to anticipate potential challenges, such as the need for emergency supplies or debris management plans. It lays the groundwork for developing strategies and understanding risks. Experience, however, brings depth to this understanding by highlighting nuance that theory alone cannot predict. For instance, while knowledge might inform someone that they need a disaster kit, experience could teach them which specific items they will actually use and which they won't.

Wisdom emerges when knowledge and experience converge. It involves the ability to make sound judgements and decisions based on both theoretical understanding and practical insights. In the context of preparedness, wisdom means not only knowing what to do but also being adaptable and resourceful when circumstances deviate from expectations. It's not the knowledge or experience, but knowledge AND experience that create the most power. The best professionals combine their knowledge with practical experience. They seek to balance the theoretical with the hands-on, using their education as a compass and their experience as a map.

Ultimately, the synergy between knowledge and experience fosters resilience. While knowledge lays the foundation, experience hones one's ability to act effectively under pressure. Together, they build the wisdom necessary for individuals to face uncertainties with confidence, turning potential disasters into manageable challenges.

Notable Quotables

Three most dangerous letters in ICS are **E-G-O**

Own the first five minutes!

Emergency Management =
Knowledge a mile wide, but
only an inch deep

Winter Storms and Blizzards

Blizzards are dangerous winter storms that are a combination of blowing snow and wind resulting in very low visibilities. While heavy snowfall and severe cold often accompany blizzards, they are not required. Officially, the National Weather Service defines a blizzard as a storm which contains large amounts of snow OR blowing snow, with winds in excess of 35 mph and visibilities of less than 1/4 mile for an extended period of time (at least three hours).

Blizzards can create life-threatening conditions. Traveling by automobile can become difficult or even impossible due to “whiteout” conditions and drifting snow. The strong winds and cold temperatures accompanying many blizzards can combine to create another danger. The wind chill factor is the amount of cooling one “feels” due to the combination of wind and temperature. Blizzards also can cause a variety of other problems. Power outages can occur due to strong winds and heavy snow. Pipes can freeze and regular fuel sources may be cut off.

With the recent reminder from mother nature that our region is still at risk of winter storms that bring heavy snow, ice, and freezing temperatures many individuals have asked what it takes to receive FEMA Public Assistance following a snow emergency.

FEMA requires a county to have experienced a record or near-record snowfall to qualify for a FEMA snow emergency declaration. FEMA considers snowfall within ten percent of the record amount to be near-record. For a look at NOAA historical snowfall information by county check out:

<https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/monitoring/snowfall-extremes/IL/>



Preparedness in Action: Upcoming Events

Checkout the upcoming events, training sessions, and exercise. These opportunities are designed to strengthen your skills, build community resilience, and keep you connected to the latest in emergency management activities locally.

TRAINING:

- Paradigm Excavator Damage Prevention & Pipeline Safety Program - Feb. 03, 2025 - https://il.pipeline-awareness.com/meeting_schedule
- Paradigm Coordinated Response Exercise Pipeline Safety Program (CoRE) - Feb. 03, 2025 - https://il.pipeline-awareness.com/meeting_schedule
- Re”MRC”able Training Workshop - Feb. 08, 2025 - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/remrcable-training-workshop-central-illinois-tickets-945077481187>
- Central Illinois WxNET Severe Weather Seminar - Mar. 01, 2025 - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1123648285269?aff=oddtcreator>

EXERCISE:

- IDPH Region2 Medical Surge Exercise - Feb. 12, 2025 (8:30-12:00p) - to participate contact Jon Quast (OSF) - jonathan.l.quast@osfhealthcare.org
- Peoria Co. Natural Disaster TTX - Mar. 12, 2025 (8:00a-12:00p) - focus on Critical Transportation, Damage Assessment, Debris Management - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SQDQC5Z>
- Peoria Co. Natural Disaster TTX - Mar. 27, 2025 (1:30p-4:30p) - focus on Mass Care, Health and Social Services, Housing - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NSJQV3Y>

Strengthening Community Resilience through National Incident Management System (NIMS)

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) serves as the cornerstone of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts across the United States. NIMS provides a standardized framework that enables organizations across all levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together effectively during incidents of all sizes and complexities. As communities nationwide utilize NIMS, comprehensive training becomes a vital component in fostering a unified and coordinated response capability.

NIMS is designed to enhance interoperability, efficiency, and communication among diverse organizations involved in emergency management. By adopting NIMS principles, communities can:

- Strengthen preparedness: Standardized processes improve readiness and reduce confusion during emergencies.
- Enhance collaboration: A common operating language facilitates cooperation among local, state, tribal, territorial, and federal agencies.
- Streamline resource management: NIMS ensures resources are deployed and managed effectively to meet incident needs.

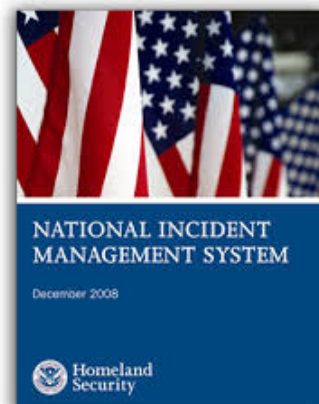
Training is a cornerstone of NIMS and plays a pivotal role in building resilience within communities. These training programs emphasize the principles of incident command, resource management, and inter-agency coordination, all of which are essential for a unified and efficient response. Those in leadership play a critical role in the success of NIMS training initiatives. By prioritizing training as a key component of disaster readiness, leaders demonstrate their commitment to building resilience within their agencies and the community as a whole. This commitment can create a culture of preparedness that resonates throughout the organization and its stakeholders. This culture not only enhances response efforts but also encourages proactive disaster planning, fostering resilience at all levels.

To fully realize the benefits of NIMS, personnel at all levels should complete appropriate training.

- IS-100: Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS): Provides the foundation for understanding ICS, a core component of NIMS.
- IS-200: Basic ICS for Initial Response: Builds on IS-100, focusing on how ICS is applied in various incident scenarios.
- IS-700: An Introduction to NIMS: Offers a comprehensive overview of NIMS principles, structure, and components.
- IS-800: National Response Framework (NRF): Explains how NIMS integrates with the NRF to coordinate national emergency response efforts.

Leadership roles often require advanced training, such as ICS-300 (Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents) and ICS-400 (Advanced ICS for Command and General Staff).

NIMS training is essential for equipping responders with the tools they need to perform effectively during emergencies. Effective NIMS implementation requires sustained commitment to training and continuous improvement. By equipping personnel with the knowledge and skills to apply NIMS principles, communities can build a stronger foundation for disaster resilience. By investing in training, leaders can strengthen their organizations and help to build community resilience. As we prepare for future challenges, let's reaffirm our commitment to collaboration and shared responsibility. Together, we can ensure a coordinated and efficient response to protect lives, property, and the environment.



Hidden Message Puzzle

This puzzle is a word search puzzle that has a hidden message in it. First find all the words in the list. Words can go in any direction and share letters as well as cross over each other. Once you find all the words. Copy the unused letters starting in the top left corner into the blanks to reveal the hidden message.

I T S N O T N A M D N F E A E T T S E N
R O F I F U B U R E O A C T M W H P E O
N W N Z C N O A C G I T N L E I K I J I
X L T L T K Z N E I T I E T R Z V H G T
P X E A J Z E G L Q A G I Y G E C S H A
P A C P I I D C T Q C U L H E F N N C G
R A H L R E D O P H I E I I N X P O O I
Y E B E L S M I I W N R S D C G M I A T
S H P W S B P T O L U P E L Y M B T A I
M X O I S E L J D W M Y R A U P D A T M
E N A V F P K K F J M G W N D F J L Y P
K R D Y S E W P T E O A I H L I Y E P M
T W E Y N T L U H X C T W I P W N R B U
T R I T C R F K A E Y Y R E V O C E R D
V D A S S P I H S R E D A E L G H Z S X
V W E I D A Y R P C H K O M H K M L Y S
V Y G V N O S E C I V K W C S T E O T C
K M G Y N I M I S S E N D E R A P E R P
S X F O U R N T D E F B S A Y M Z D B Y
R A D I O L O G I C A L G N G Y X P C B

Blizzard
Communication
Community
Disaster
Emergency

Exercise
Experience
Fatigue
Knowledge
Leadership

Mitigation
Nuclear
Preparedness
Radiological
Readiness

Recovery
Relationships
Resilience
Training
Wisdom

_____, _____
_____, _____!

Advice for Surviving a Disaster: Be Selfish and Small-Minded

How can you best help in a disaster? Be selfish and small-minded. Often first responders are trained to focus on the needs of others, often putting our own well-being aside to ensure the safety and security of our communities. In times of disaster, the pressures we face can be overwhelming. While dedication to duty is a cornerstone of emergency response, it's equally critical to recognize the importance of self-care during these demanding times.

Disasters can place immense physical, mental, and emotional strain on first responders. Long hours, high-stakes decisions, and exposure to traumatic events can lead to burnout, compassion, fatigue, and even long-term mental health challenges if not addressed. Self-care isn't just about feeling better, it's about maintaining resilience, focus, and strength needed to perform effectively in high-stress situations.



Practical self-care tips for first responders include:

- Stay hydrated and nourished - your body's performance depends on the proper fuel.
- Rest when you can - even short breaks for rest or meditation can help recharge your energy and clarity.
- Lean on your team - share the workload and communicate openly about challenges.
- Recognize your limits - it's okay to ask for help as pushing beyond your limits can compromise both your safety and the mission.

As leaders and colleagues, it's vital to foster an environment where self-care is encouraged and normalized. Check in on each other, celebrate small victories, and promote access to resources such as peer support groups, counseling, and wellness programs. By prioritizing self-care, we can ensure we're ready to respond not just today but for the challenges of tomorrow. Your health and well-being are essential for you, your family, and the communities you serve.

Why Empathy Matters in Leadership

Deepens Connection - Empathy allows leaders to forge stronger bonds with their team members by understanding their emotions and perspectives. This leads to a more cohesive and support work environment.

Enhances Decision-Making - Leaders can make more informed and considerate decisions, benefiting the entire organization by better grasping others' needs and feelings.

Fosters a Positive Workplace - An empathetic approach contributes to a culture of openness and respect, where everyone feels valued and understood.



Counter Terrorism Operations Support (CTOS) Center for Radiological/Nuclear Training

The Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) Counter Terrorism Operations Support (CTOS) program's mission is to develop and deliver the most realistic and highest quality training in support of homeland security using extensive radiological expertise with the unique assets of the NNSS.

The nation's premier radiological/nuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMD) counterterrorism training center has trained America's first responders since 1998. CTOS represents the NNSA's Nevada Field Office as a charter member of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC). The NNSS CTOS program develops and delivers training for emergency responders to take immediate, decisive action to prevent or respond to terrorist use of radiological or nuclear WMD, such as radiological dispersal devices and improvised nuclear devices.



The NNSS is a large, outdoor laboratory, national experimental center, and training facility located in Nevada. Originally established for testing nuclear weapons, from 1951 to 1992, NNSS was the location of 928 nuclear tests and numerous radiological dispersal tests. Today, the 1355 square miles of secluded and secure land at NNSS provides a safe environment for training in realistic WMD scenarios. CTOS courses, except for the awareness-level and online courses, are performance based using multiple types of radioactive material, most of which is special nuclear materials, such as uranium and plutonium. Courses are designed so participants receive only minor radiation doses, lower than a chest x-ray or a typical round-trip airline flight across the United States. The radiation levels are sufficient to learn techniques required in an actual incident. Each participant operates and employs radiation detection and measurement instruments throughout the course and train with radioactive material in classroom practice, scenario-based drills, and performance evaluations.

Peoria Area Maritime Security Council

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, substantially changed the risk profile of the Nation's ports, waterways, Marine Transportation Systems, and Maritime Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources. In November 2002 the President established the Area Maritime Security Councils (AMSCs) to provide a link for contingency planning, development, review and update of plans. They seek to enhance communication between port stakeholders to foster a culture of security both cyber and traditional, within the port environment to better address maritime security issues.



The AMSC responsibilities include:

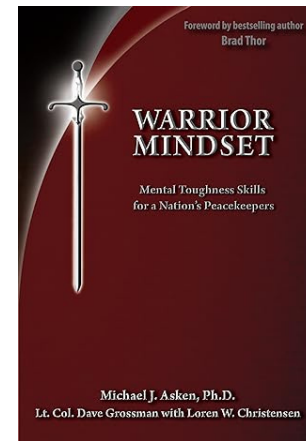
- Identification of critical port infrastructure and operations.
- Identification of risks within the port.
- Determination of mitigation strategies and implementation methods.
- Provide advice and assistance in development of the AMS plan.

Area Maritime Security Councils are cornerstones in bolstering the lines of defense of our Nation's ports. Their importance cannot be over emphasized. Collaborative planning, coordination, open lines of communication, working relationships and unity of effort are essential to providing layered security and effective measures across all segments of the maritime transportation system.

Resilience Reading Room

Lt. Dave Grossman's *Warrior Mindset* revolves around the psychological, emotional, and physical discipline required to excel in high-stress, high-stakes situations. Grossman emphasizes the importance of mental toughness, situational awareness, and moral clarity in developing a mindset that enables individuals to confront and overcome fear, danger, and conflict effectively.

At the core of this mindset is the idea of the "sheepdog", a metaphor Grossman uses to describe protectors in society. Sheepdogs are vigilant and prepared to defend others (the "sheep") from harm, often posed by predators ("wolves"). This concept underscores a sense of responsibility and readiness, where warriors train not only their bodies but also their mind to react decisively in crises while maintaining ethical integrity.



Grossman also delves into the physiological and psychological effects of high-stress scenarios. He discusses the fight-or-flight response, the role of stress inoculation through training, and the importance of mastering fear and adrenaline. By understanding how the brain and body reach under pressure, warriors can remain focused and perform effectively even in chaotic environments.

Ultimately, Grossman advocates for a balance between strength and compassion. While the warrior must be capable of confronting violence with skill and resolve, they must also embody a profound sense of empathy and protectiveness toward those they serve. This duality ensures that the warrior mindset is not merely about confrontation but about safeguarding and upholding societal values even in the face of adversity.

Responder Fatigue - A Growing Concern

The dedication and resilience of first responders are cornerstones of effective disaster response. Yet, an increasingly pressing issue during disaster response continues to be responder fatigue. As the frequency and intensity of emergencies rise, the physical and mental well-being of responders is under strain like never before. Emergency scenarios are becoming more complex and responders face extended hours in high-stress environments, often without adequate rest or recovery time. This prolonged strain not only affects their performance but also poses risks to their health, increasing the risk of injury, burnout, and long-term mental health challenges.



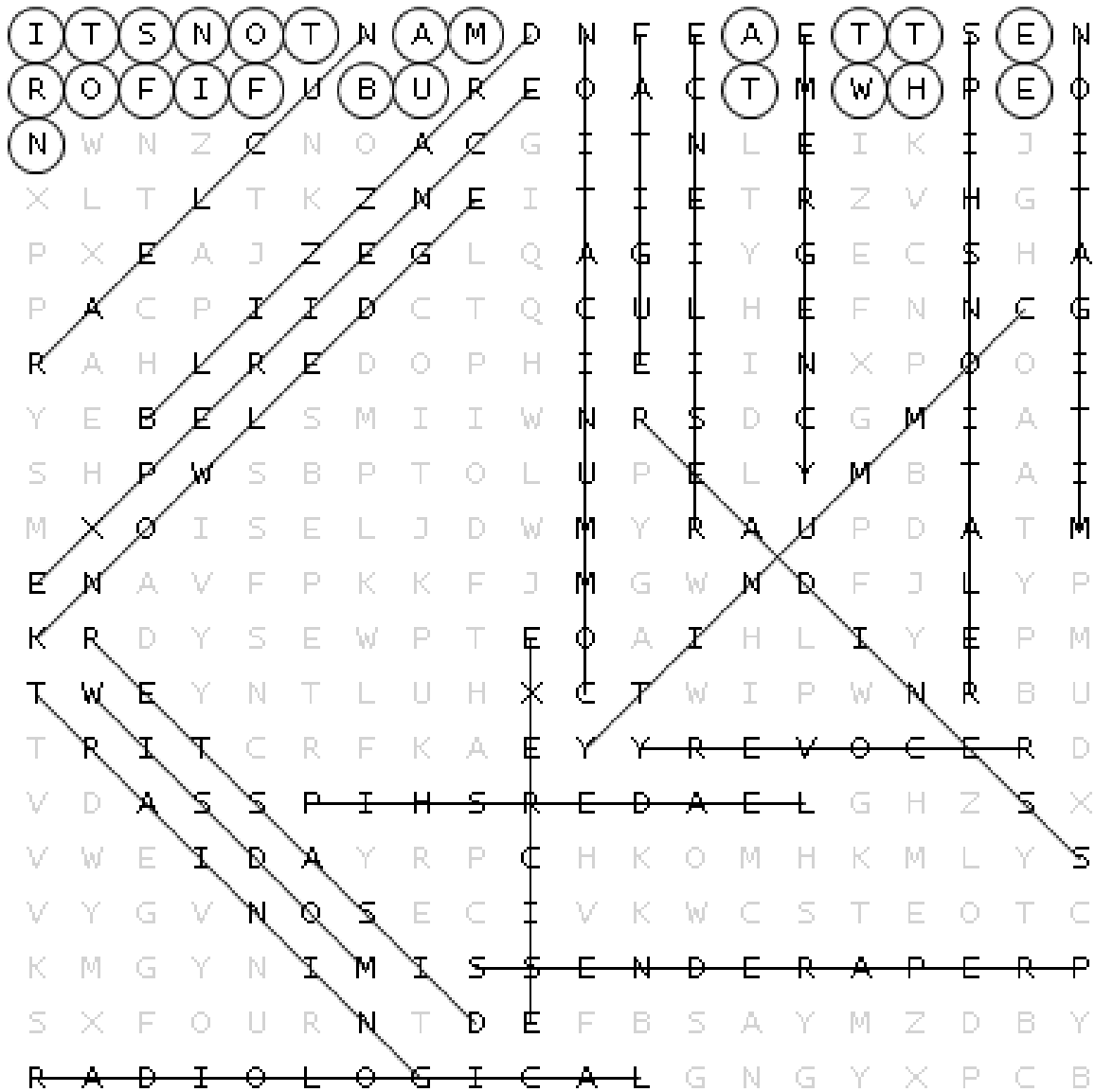
Fatigue doesn't just impact individual responders; it can compromise entire operations. Addressing responder fatigue requires a proactive, multi-faceted approach:

- Training and awareness - educate individuals on recognizing the signs of fatigue and stress.
- Access to mental health support - regularly provide counseling and stress management resources.
- Use of technology - explore devices that monitor vital signs alerting to physical exhaustion.
- Post-incident recovery - incorporate formal debriefing and recovery time into operational plans.

Addressing responder fatigue requires systematic changes and investments in people. Providing mental health support and fostering a culture that prioritizes the health of responders can mitigate fatigue. By prioritizing the well-being of those on the front lines, we ensure not only their safety but also the effectiveness of our response systems. Let's commit to creating a culture that values resilience as much as readiness.

Hidden Message Puzzle

Answers below for the puzzle found on page 6.



Blizzard
Communication
Community
Disaster
Emergency

Exercise
Experience
Fatigue
Knowledge
Leadership

Mitigation
Nuclear
Preparedness
Radiological
Readiness

Recovery
Relationships
Resilience
Training
Wisdom

**IT'S NOT A MATTER OF IF,
BUT WHEN!**