



News Release

Contacts:

Beth LaGuardia, American Public University System
703.396.6421, blaguardia@apus.edu

Carolyn Russell, Russell Public Relations
316.932.9000, news@russellpr.com

**Emergency response and disaster management:
preparing for in-demand careers that make a real difference**

CHARLES TOWN, W.Va., Feb. 9, 2006 — Did you vow this year to make a difference, find a better job or pursue a new profession? With a career in emergency response, you might accomplish all three and make your community and country safer, too.

“Today, there is a critical and growing need for emergency response and disaster management professionals with the right education and skills,” says Dr. Gwen Hall of American Public University System (<http://www.apu.apus.edu/emergency-disaster>), a distance learning institution serving more than 13,000 students worldwide.

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that the field will increase by 22.8 percent by 2012. Salaries are rising as well, to an average of \$49,730 annually, according to recent Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Critical thinking, logistics and more

“This growth was projected before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita,” says Hall. She estimates the demand to be even higher as the private and public sector examine their own disaster management programs.

Hall is the department chair for the University System’s homeland security and emergency and disaster management programs. These programs are some of the nation’s largest — with more than 1,300 students preparing for careers that demand a wide range of skills.

“Emergency management is much more than being trained in first response or even evacuation,” says Hall. “Emergency managers need a strong background in critical thinking, logistics, financial management, urban planning and more.”

One student’s plan

Laura Shapland is an analyst with a company that offers emergency management computer training simulations. Shapland develops disaster scenarios, such as the effects of a natural disaster or a large-scale health threat. The scenarios help firefighters, first responders, and government employees better plan for disaster recovery.

“I want to be that emergency management professional who has the right kind of knowledge for both pre-disaster planning and post-disaster response,” says Shapland, who is pursuing her emergency and disaster management degree from American Public University System. “A strong academic background helps at all levels of my current position — research, finance, long-term planning and more.”

Learning from the pros

Shapland also learns from educators who are professionals in the areas they teach. Professor Chris Reynolds, for example, brings more than 26 years of field experience to the virtual classroom. He is a battalion fire chief and a major in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. He provided emergency medical relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina.

“The first-hand experiences of Professor Reynolds and others give us insights that stretch beyond the textbooks,” says Shapland.

Students like Shapland can gain expertise in all aspects of emergency and disaster management, such as incident command, psychology of disaster, environmental management and more.

Resources

To get started in the field, Professor Hall suggests researching professional organizations such as the International Association of Emergency Managers (www.iaem.com) and the National Emergency Management Association (www.nemaweb.org/jobs/index.cfm).

“You’ll be able to see the kinds of issues professionals are tackling and have a better idea if the career is a fit for you,” Hall says.

Other career-related resources include:

- Occupational Information Network:
<http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/13-1061.00>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):
www.fema.gov/career/index.jsp
- Transportation Security Administration: <https://tsacareers.recruitsoft.com>
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC): www.cdc.gov/hrmo/hrmo.htm

About the University System

American Public University System is comprised of American Public University (APU) and American Military University (AMU). The distance learning institution delivers more than 50 undergraduate and graduate programs.

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