

King County Office of Emergency Management Podcasts ***Disasters: Are you ready?***

It's all about people

There are any number of emergency management mission statements that talk about “Protecting people, property and the environment.” Many times those are the priorities used in disaster response, saving people, property and at the same time protecting the environment.

We spend our days working to establish communications systems, improve our disaster response facilities, educate the public about hazards and how to become prepared for disasters, and let's not forget the ever present planning that is always ongoing if you work in emergency management.

But what are we really all about? Doesn't it start and end with people? Isn't what we do, even when working on facility issues—all about the people. When I say, “Building disaster resistant and resilient communities” am I not really just talking about the people who make up the communities?

When we think in terms of disciplines such as fire, police, public works, PIOs and sectors of our society is it really about what they do, or is it about who they are? Plan and simple, bottom line, they are people.

In our modern society we sometimes make up these artificial categories that segregate us from one another. Government versus private sectors, “First Responders” versus “Emergency Responders.” And, on and on it goes. Big cities versus small cities, large box retailers versus mom and pop operations. However, the foundation for all of this is the people.

I suppose that if we were to take people from all walks of life and take off all their cloths and line them up together with no form of identification or means of identifying who they are or what they do, we'd still start sorting them out by short versus tall and thin versus

heavy set. I guess our minds are such that to “order the world around us” we must set up categories. The downside is that I then see these categories separating us and not unifying us.

Perhaps a topic for another Podcast would be how I don't see regional action as being one that is naturally occurring in nature or our modern society. The energy that does exist repels people and organizations, and this naturally occurring energy doesn't bring them together.

The whole point being that what we do from elevating homes to avoid flooding, or restoring economic vitality to a region after a disaster is not about the house and it is not about the business. It is about the people who make up the family who live in the house and call it home. Economic vitality is not about making money for profit's sake, but about providing jobs for people, who make up families in our community.

Who we are and what we do is really all about the people. Let us not let that get lost in the mix of programs, grants and disasters.