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Some of the same ideas discussed in classrooms at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security are being pushed at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

That was the message from Tim Manning during opening remarks at the CHDS Alumni Conference on Feb. 3. Manning is the Deputy Administrator for Protection and National Preparedness at FEMA and is also a graduate of the CHDS Executive Leaders Program (ELP).

Manning said he, ELP grad and FEMA Deputy Administrator Rich Serino and a team of others were working toward initiatives that represent a bit of a culture change at the agency.

"We're bringing a lot of ideas that are not necessarily easy, things that make sense to us, things that you have had conversations about," he told more than 100 alumni gathered in the Hermann Hall McNitt Ballroom.



Those initiatives include a ground-up national preparedness system, improved resilience for average citizens and educational programs to professionalize the emergency management/homeland security profession.

Manning said FEMA officials are pushing for a "coherent" national preparedness doctrine that is based on local governments identifying their threats, need and resources. He discussed two 2003 Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPD 5 and HSPD 8) at the onset and how they work together in preparing for and responding to catastrophic events.

However, he said directives from Washington are not the answer to a well-rounded preparedness plan.

"We can't, in Washington, determine the resources needed in your communities; you know that," Manning said. "We will never be able in Washington to identify the unique hazards that are faced by Wichita, Kansas, and a town roughly the same size in, say, California. There are things unique to those communities that cannot be identified by people in Washington."

Instead, the preparedness planning that he envisions needs to begin at the local government level.

"We build a system that lets communities determine their risks, what they need to live with, what they choose to live with, and then they can identify the gaps," Manning said. "We (then) have a picture that I can take to the appropriations committees and to the Office of Management and Budget and say 'this is what we need to be prepared,'"

As for community preparedness, he said efforts are needed to enable individuals to withstand events.

"If we can grow the individual, the resilience, the ability of the American people to withstand incidents in the first place and not require assistance, that lets us focus on the ones that need our help, lets us focus our efforts on the

truly large disasters," Manning said.

Lastly, Manning discussed his vision of educational programs to improve the training of emergency management professionals.

He noted that law enforcement and firefighting professionals generally have training at the onset of their careers as well as periodic opportunities throughout their profession.

Conversely, emergency management professionals lack those types of opportunities.

"There is no discipline, no system, and no process by which we take new people into emergency management and say 'this is how you learn your craft.'" Manning said.

More education and professional development would help make skills transferable from state to state for the betterment of mutual aid activities.

"We should build an educational system that grows new leaders and builds a cadre that can build better doctrine," Manning said.

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