**Teaching Points**

**Special Considerations:**

The discussion for this week is special considerations. The reading assignment discusses some unique issues and I would like to discuss a few more not covered in the text. The first is special needs populations. To start, a significant challenge is defining a special needs population. How would you as an Emergency Manager describe special needs? Children? The elderly? People with disabilities? Wards of the state such as prisoners, children in foster care, etc.? Nursing home residents? Whom else? What portion of the population could be identified as a special needs population? In recent years special needs populations have been renamed to be somewhat more inclusive to “persons with access and functional needs”. However, regardless of title the underlying objectives remain the same. How to we appropriately care for these groups during an emergency? How do we as Emergency Managers make the difficult decision(s) of allocating potentially scarce resource to a small subset of the population? Isn’t the idea of Emergency Management to do the most for the most? How would you reconcile any fallout of the perception of not appropriately managing special needs populations?

The next special consideration to discuss is more a situation and that is the idea of evacuation. It is a term that is widely used and with any number of varying techniques but, at best it is an extremely challenging undertaking. The first challenge is determining when an evacuation should occur. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that provides an accurate determination of when to conduct an evacuation. While some circumstances provide an easy determination for small scale evacuations such as fires, or chemical releases. The decision for large-scale evacuations become much more difficult and determining why, when, how are equally challenging. So, what are some of the considerations for evacuation? Why are we evacuating? What is the foundational cause of evacuation? Is it a natural, human-caused or technological disaster and how does the cause effect the evacuation?

Let’s put a few questions into perspective and discuss this scenario. You are the Emergency Manager of county along the ocean coast. A Tropical Storm has been upgraded to a Category 2 hurricane and current predictions have the storm building in strength to a Category 3 or 4 hurricane over the next two days. The storm is projected to make landfall approximately 100 miles south of your county and track northward before turning out to sea. What are your thoughts on evacuation at this point?

Some information on your county. Your county has 250,000 residents, a county prison housing 120 inmates, two hospitals and a small university. Does this information change your thoughts on evacuation? If so, what are your other options for protecting all the various populations? There is also a discussion that in my experience is often overlooked when discussing evacuation and this is where are the evacuees being relocated. Do we need to track certain populations? If so, how does this occur?

The point of this exercise is to demonstrate the complexity of evacuation and perhaps open the conversation for other options that are perhaps less complex but will require an equal degree of planning.

What are other special considerations that you have encountered or have in interest in discussing further?