



Ericka Evans, Tribal member and Regional Emergency Coordinator |
*Mark Schorr**

For Ericka Evans, the 2020 Labor Day fires were a life-changing experience. Working in a coastal hospital, she saw another hospital “evacuate their facility and transfer their patients to our hospital. We saw years of planning, exercise, training and coordination come into action in real time.”

“It was incredibly impactful to watch those plans come to life and see patients continue to receive care. Before that, I don’t think I fully understood how significant a wildfire could affect a hospital’s operations and regional healthcare delivery. It changed the way I view preparedness, and it also reinforced for me that the work we do before an emergency directly shapes how effectively we can respond when a disaster happens.”

For five years, Ericka has been a Hospital Preparedness Planner / Regional Emergency Coordinator (HPP REC) in the Health Security Preparedness and Response (HSPR) program for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). Her work focuses on supporting and planning for emergency preparedness and response for hospitals and healthcare facilities in Southwestern Oregon. She is gratified when she can provide support to hospitals and other healthcare partners who may be struggling with diminished resources, or histories of competing with each other. She had six years prior experience in a hospital-based

emergency management position and was enthused when she could move to a position with “the opportunity to bring healthcare leaders, emergency management professionals, public health and regional partners together to strengthen healthcare preparedness. I had experienced firsthand how important these partnerships are during emergencies and was excited to help build and support them on a broader regional scale.”

During an emergency, in her regional positioning, Ericka can share up-to-date information to her SERV-OR colleagues to support a deployment request. She also understands the significant impact SERV-OR volunteers make when responding during a crisis. Her experience reinforces the value of supporting volunteers effectively to best serve the community.

Originally, Ericka planned to work hands-on in emergency medicine and was credentialed as an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician), but after being drawn to broader emergency responses, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Emergency Management and Public Safety in 2021 from Grand Canyon University, graduating Summa Cum Laude and eventually wound up at the Oregon Health Authority.

Being from the Lakota Sioux, Rosebud Tribe (of South Dakota), she takes great pleasure in being able to support Tribal communities in the six rural counties she has responsibility for in [Regions 5 and 7](#), which include Lane, Douglas, Coos, Curry, Jackson and Josephine Counties. “One of the most complex challenges of my role is working across a large and diverse regions where healthcare organizations have different resources, priorities and needs. What works well for one community or organization may not work for neighboring communities. So, a big part of my job is understanding those differences and helping partners find solutions that make sense for their community.”

“I have learned that emergency preparedness is ultimately about relationships. Plans, trainings, and exercises are important but the relationships we build before an emergency are what allow organizations and communities to work together effectively. A large part of what I value about my role is helping create a space where regional healthcare partners can come to the table to discuss preparedness efforts.”

*[Mark Schorr](#) is a SERV-OR volunteer and a member of the Bulletin Development Team.