

Talking to Brandy Bishop, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde | *Cayetana Gomez de Soler**



For Brandy Bishop, the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, emergency management is about much more than responding when disaster strikes. It is about preparing people, strengthening relationships, preserving essential services, and building a community capable of caring for one another when normal systems are disrupted.

Since taking on the role in April 2016, Brandy has watched emergency management at Grand Ronde grow significantly. The work now encompasses emergency planning, training and exercises, emergency communications, response coordination, and managing the Emergency Coordination Center when activated. Just as important is helping Tribal departments, employees, volunteers, and community members understand their roles before, during, and after an emergency.

“We are really focused on building long-term resiliency within Grand Ronde”, Brandy explains. That means preparing for how the community will communicate if normal systems fail, evacuate and shelter safely, maintain essential services, and support vulnerable community members.

At the heart of that work are relationships. Emergency management cannot be accomplished by one person or department. Brandy works closely with Tribal police, health & wellness, social services, public health, education, facilities, elder services, administration, Spirit Mountain Casino, and other Tribal programs, while also building partnerships with County, State, Federal, nonprofit, private-sector, and other Tribal organizations.

The path to emergency management grew from a career dedicated to helping others. After serving as a U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman, Brandy continued working in healthcare and caregiving, including at the Tribe’s Health & Wellness Center and in Tribal adult foster care and assisted living. Experience in child safety and prevention added another dimension. The common thread has always been service. Emergency management simply expanded that responsibility from helping individuals to preparing an entire community.

As an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the work also carries a personal meaning. “This isn’t just where I work, this is my community and these are our people,” she says. That connection shapes the way preparedness is approached. Grand Ronde is a sovereign Tribal government with its own services, resources, history and responsibilities. Preparing for emergencies therefore means more than surviving an immediate crisis. It means protecting people and resources, maintaining essential services, supporting recovery, and preserving the connections that hold the community together.

Brandy also points to the importance of Tribal knowledge. Long before terms such as “emergency management” and “community resilience” existed, Tribal communities practiced cooperation,

adaptation, survival, and caring for one another. Stories and knowledge shared by Elders carry lessons that can strengthen modern preparedness and be passed to future generations.

The same spirit extends to relationships beyond Grand Ronde. Disasters do not recognize jurisdictional boundaries, making cooperation among Tribal, County, State and Federal partners essential. This includes community volunteers, who are equally important. Through training and education, Grand Ronde is building a community where people have the knowledge and skills to help themselves and others when professional responders are stretched thin. One of the most rewarding things for Brandy is seeing people recognize that preparedness belongs to everyone. “It’s when people stop seeing preparedness as something the Emergency Manager does and start seeing themselves as part of it.”

Ultimately, resilience is built one relationship, one training, one volunteer, and one conversation at a time. For Grand Ronde, preparedness is about bringing generations of Tribal knowledge together with modern emergency management and remembering that, at its heart, preparedness is people taking care of people.

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