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Opioid Use and Overdoses at Epidemic Levels

In June, the Washington Post reported [nearly 1.3 million Americans needed hospital care for opioid-related medical issues in 2014](#), the most recent year full statistics are available for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. These numbers represent a 99 percent increase in emergency room treatment since 2005. [West Virginia](#) topped another study as the state with the highest overdose deaths.

Heroin is only partly to blame; prescription abuse has skyrocketed. [Drivers killed while under the influence of prescription opioids](#) increased by a factor of seven since 1995. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates [doctors prescribed enough opioid painkillers in 2010 to medicate every American continually for a month](#). Some locations are beginning to struggle with [prison overcrowding](#) or [requiring schools to stock naloxone](#) while others are bringing [murder charges against dealers](#) in an attempt to curb the problem.

Fire and EMS departments are on the front lines responding to the increasing number of overdoses. Many responders now carry the drug naloxone –a controversial choice for some – to save overdose victims. However, while treating an addict's overdose saves lives, naloxone will never be the answer to the opioid problem.

At the Fire-Rescue International conference in July, Howard County, Maryland, Fire Rescue officers [discussed how the opioid problem affects the fire services](#). They see this as an opportunity to adjust the course of the problem, getting addicts the help they need, and creating much-needed dialogue between lawmakers, public health departments, and responding agencies.

There is no quick fix to this problem; [it took years to develop](#) and it will likely get worse before it gets better. Because of the role fire and EMS play in response, agencies are encouraged to build a dialog with public health, law enforcement, social services and elected officials to ensure they have a voice in any plan to combat the opioid epidemic nationally as well as locally.

(Source: [CDC](#))

Are Your Emergency Plans Realistic?

If a tsunami-causing earthquake hit the Seattle area, [students attending one elementary school would be required to evacuate to higher ground two miles away](#). The plan estimates it would take 20 minutes for the students to get there. This time would include teachers organizing students, and the route would take them through neigh-

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borhoods and fields that could potentially contain hazards such as downed power lines, debris, fires or buckled pavement.

A [high school track athlete ran the route](#) to test it out and made it in just under 15 minutes with no hazards to avoid. Based on this test, it seems unlikely students from the elementary school or the rest of the community could successfully make it to the evacuation site. The situation has caused much anxiety and the community plans to build [North America's first refuge berm](#) closer to the population center.

Population growth, new buildings, road construction and other unexpected things can affect plans and jurisdictions should review them regularly to ensure they are still viable. Well-written and properly tested disaster plans help everyone – emergency managers, public officials, the public and businesses – understand their role in an emergency and how they can be better prepared.

(Source: [IFPO](#))

EDGE First Responder Training Online Town Hall

The developers of the new free virtual training platform [Enhanced Dynamic Geo-Social Environment, or EDGE](#), are hosting a Facebook Town Hall “First Responder Live Tech Talk” on Monday, August 14, 2017, from 2:00 to 2:30 p.m. Eastern to demonstrate the platform and answer questions from first responders. The new complex role-play training platform was featured in the June 29 InfoGram; this online town hall is a great opportunity to see it in action and find out more about obtaining it.

The development team will discuss who is eligible to obtain the training program as well as system requirements, benefits of the system, and how to get it. There will also be a sneak peek of the new training scenario – a school shooting response – slated for release this fall.

Follow the Department of Homeland Security's [Science and Technology Directorate's Facebook page](#) for more details.

(Source: [DHS S&T](#))

2017 National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month and the theme for 2017 is “[Disasters Don't Plan Ahead. You Can.](#)” Every region of the United States has disasters that are expected and can be planned for, whether it is winter storms, hurricanes, or earthquakes, yet many Americans still have no plan, no kit, and have not taken the time to prepare their families or homes.

There are many resources available toward this goal on the [Ready.gov website](#) including directions for making a plan; information on special groups, how to build a kit, and how to get involved in your community's preparedness activities. Each week in September will focus on a different aspect of planning for disasters including making and practicing a plan, helping neighbors, and getting involved.

The Ready.gov website has social media content for public relations campaigns already written as well as lists of applicable web resources, videos, graphics and logos to better engage with your audience. The information is broken down by weekly topic for convenience. You can also access Ready.gov's informational pages on different natural and man-made disasters or medical emergencies common to your region.

(Source: [Ready.gov](#))

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