Emergency Management and Response - Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)

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Factors affecting evacuation in 2016 Tennessee wildfires

In 2016, Tennessee experienced a fast-moving wildfire that killed 14 and injured over 200 people. This region is not known for these types of wildfires and the community was largely unprepared to respond or evacuate.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) surveyed affected residents of the county most impacted by the fire to identify factors related to their decision to flee or stay behind. The survey looked at risk perception, gender, warnings from trusted sources and household evacuation plans.

The survey revealed nearly 80 percent of evacuations occurred on the day the fire had breached the city limits, despite the fire burning for days in the nearby Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In addition, less than a quarter of surveyed residents received any type of warning or had prepared an evacuation plan.

Researchers also uncovered an unexpected phenomenon: smoke appeared to lower peoples' sense of danger. Other interesting findings:

- Sense of security (real or false) was the most critical factor.
- Households that took measures to minimize their fire risk were twice as likely to stay put.
- Having an evacuation plan made households about twice as likely to leave.
- Women were almost three times more likely than men to evacuate.

The full results of this research are outlined in the International Journal of Wildland Fire article, which you can request through your local library.

(Source: NIST)

New IPAWS Program Planning Toolkit

The new Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Program Planning Toolkit will help new and existing state, local, tribal and territorial alerting authorities create and support an effective program for alerts, warnings and notifications, a cornerstone of good emergency and disaster response.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) worked to identify gaps in existing IPAWS messaging. The result was this toolkit, which consists of three documents: the IPAWS Lab Fact Sheet, IPAWS Frequently Asked Questions, and the IPAWS Train the Trainer Guide.

The new toolkit will assist public safety agencies to:

- Minimize alerting delays.
- Plan for future alerts, warnings and notifications enhancements.
- Facilitate interoperability across different technologies.

Highlights

Factors affecting evacuation in 2016 Tennessee wildfires

New IPAWS Program Planning Toolkit

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U.S. Fire Administration

The U.S. Fire Administration operates the Emergency Management and Response – Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC).

For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.

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- Improve information sharing among emergency management and public safety officials.

IPAWS is FEMA's national local alerting system. It provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts, radio and television via the Emergency Alert System, and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Radio.

See FEMA's IPAWS webpage for more information on the program and further resources.

(Source: FEMA)

Age range of COVID-19 patients trended younger this summer

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released data this week showing how the most common age range of positive cases of COVID-19 from June-August was 20-29, as opposed to older Americans as was the case earlier in the pandemic.

The CDC looked at areas in the South where cases spiked this summer and also found a correlation between increases by age group. Specifically, numbers showed the percentage of positive test results among adults aged 20–39 years preceded increases among adults aged ≥60 years by an average of 8.7 days.

This study suggests community transmissions were driven in part by younger adults to older adults. The World Health Organization reported similar findings worldwide. Causes include younger people in frontline occupations and more young Americans socializing at gatherings without masks or maintaining social distancing. See the CDC September 23, 2020, Early Release for further details and limitations of the study.

(Source: CDC)

FEMA's National Exercise Program accepting nominations

FEMA's National Exercise Division is now accepting nominations to the National Exercise Program (NEP). The program offers no-cost assistance for exercise design, development, execution and evaluation to validate capabilities across all mission areas.

Fall nomination round submissions are due by November 1, 2020, and decisions will be sent by December 1, 2020. Download and complete the Exercise Nomination Form and submit it by the due date. Full instructions are available on the FEMA website. The NEP will hold additional exercise nomination rounds in spring and fall of 2021.

FEMA will host two 60-minute webinars for partners to discuss the nomination process. Webinars are scheduled for 2:00 p.m. Eastern on September 22, 2020, and October 6, 2020. Webinars will discuss how NEP can support exercises in a COVID-19 environment and the proposed 2021-2022 Principals' Strategic Priorities. Participate in either webinar by FEMA Teleconference (1-800-320-4330, PIN 559550#) or FEMA Adobe Connect.

(Source: FEMA)

Cyber Threats

Digital identity & AI: keeping deepfakes from spreading disinformation

Imagine knowing nothing about NASA's 1969 Apollo 11 mission, and then you watch a video of former President Richard Nixon breaking the news that it failed and all astronauts involved died.

While the mission was actually a success, a recent deepfake video produced by MIT and Modzilla shows how easy it is becoming to bend the reality of a historical event. What this video shows is how far AI-generated deepfake technology has come in recent years, and if it's used for malicious purposes state-sponsored cyber attackers can spread disinformation on a global scale through social media to sway individuals' opinions on topics such as an election or international policies.

If organizations use secure authentication techniques, ethical AI algorithms can build a library of trusted digital identity data because the source of content is verifiable. Social media platforms that implement identity management approaches can adjust login journeys to identify both legitimate and suspicious users and uncover threats.

(Source: HSToday)

Patient dies after ransomware attack hits German hospital

A woman seeking emergency treatment died after a ransomware attack crippled a hospital in Germany, forcing her to obtain services from a more distant facility.

German authorities are investigating the unknown perpetrators on suspicion of negligent manslaughter. The event under investigation occurred when the unidentified woman was turned away from Düsseldorf University Hospital because a ransomware attack hampered its ability to operate normally. The woman was rushed to a hospital about 20 miles away, resulting in about a one-hour delay in treatment. She died.

(Source: Wired)

More cyberattacks in the first half of 2020 than in all of 2019

A study of recent threat activity showed more intrusion attempts in the first six months of this year than in all of 2019.

A security vendor's threat-hunting team blocked some 41,000 potential intrusions from January 1-June 30, 2020, compared with 35,000 for all of last year. Incidents of hands-on-keyboard intrusions in the first six months of 2020 — where a threat actor is actively engaged in malicious activity — was some 154 percent higher than the number of similar instances researchers observed in 2019.

Predictably, one of the biggest causes for the increased threat activity was the rapid adoption of remote workforces in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Another driving factor was the growing availability of ransomware-as-a-service offerings and the resulting increase in threat actors and attack activity in the space. There was a notable increase especially in ransomware attacks that also involved the theft of sensitive data and subsequent attempts to extort victims with threats to publicly release the data

(Source: Dark Readings)

Cyber Information and Incident Assistance Links

MS-ISAC
SOC@cisecurity.org
1-866-787-4722

IdentityTheft.gov

IC3

Cybercrime Support Network

General Information Links

FTC scam list

CISA alerts

Law Enforcement Cyber Center

TLP Information

The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.