

Contact: Dawn Shiley
IAEM Communications Manager
703-538-3542



IAEM Headquarters
201 Park Washington Court
Falls Church, VA
22046-4527 USA
Ph. 703-538-1795
www.iaem.com

News Release

“Real” Emergency Managers Concerned over Michigan’s Misuse of the Job Title

March 15, 2016 (Falls Church, Va.) – Members of the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), the premier international professional association representing more than 5,000 professional emergency managers worldwide, including more than 4,200 in the United States, believe there is serious confusion and misunderstanding of the use of the term "emergency manager" in the press and public related to the Flint, Michigan, water situation. Traditional emergency managers focus on preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters or crisis situations. The term "emergency manager" has been used to describe those in the business of saving lives, protecting property, and restoring communities for more than 40 years.

“One thing must be made absolutely clear: the term ‘emergency manager’ in the Flint, Michigan, situation refers to a fiscal-only function that bears no relationship to the term as it is commonly and universally used on a national and an international basis,” stated Robie Robinson, IAEM-USA president. “In the context of the Flint situation, emergency managers are actually municipal ‘emergency *financial* managers’ (EFMs) established by the Michigan legislature and appointed by the governor to oversee jurisdictions in Michigan that are threatened with financial insolvency.”

The use of the term "emergency manager" to describe these appointed financial managers in Michigan has generated an incredible amount of dangerous confusion for the public, especially since the Flint issue has now become a national story. Dedicated emergency managers across the country now are being forced to address questions that underline a misguided sense of concern about the role of an emergency manager. Unfortunately, an impression is beginning to take shape that emergency managers exist to "cut budgets and reduce costs at the expense of community safety and security," Robinson noted, when indeed the exact opposite is true. “This confusion is damaging community confidence in real emergency managers both in and out of Michigan, and in doing so it is making our communities more vulnerable,” concluded Robinson.

IAEM urges all media, members of government, and other leaders to educate the public, and help clarify that, in Michigan, an individual who is appointed to oversee a governmental body or jurisdiction because it is threatened with financial insolvency is not an "emergency manager," but rather an “emergency financial manager.” Further, real emergency managers work every day in support of public safety agencies, local volunteer and service organizations, businesses, the media, and everyone in between, striving to build relationships in their communities to help keep people safe. They cannot do this without the trust of the people they serve.

IAEM-USA, the nation’s largest emergency management professional association, is a non-profit professional organization representing more than 4,200 emergency management and homeland security professionals for local communities, state and federal disaster officials, private sector, non-governmental organizations and others involved in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all types of disasters including acts of terrorism. IAEM provides: access to the largest network of emergency management experts who can provide advice and assistance; the Certified Emergency Manager program; annual scholarships; a comprehensive monthly newsletter; and more.

####