

NEWS



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For Immediate Release:

Regional Emergency Preparedness Officials and University Researchers Hold First Regional Conference Dealing with Vulnerable Populations

Drexel University, the Drexel Engineering Cities Initiative and the City of Philadelphia Managing Director's Office of Emergency Management will sponsor the first region-wide conference that will bring together university-based researchers, regional non-profits, along with emergency preparedness officials and practitioners. Participants, attending the two-day conference, Preparedness in the Region: Confronting Vulnerability in the Delaware Valley, will explore issues dealing with the most vulnerable populations, including those with special needs and limited English proficiency, during times of disaster. The conference will be held on October 10-11 at Drexel University's Paul Peck Alumni Center, 3142 Market Street.

"It is essential that emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts address the needs of vulnerable populations," said MaryAnn E. Marrocolo, deputy managing director for emergency management for the City of Philadelphia. "These efforts often require creative measures, focused resources, and comprehensive citizen outreach efforts to ensure we can safely and adequately accommodate those who are most vulnerable during emergencies."

Organizing strong partnerships among the public, private and non-profit sectors in our region; developing inclusive public information and outreach reach efforts; and

recognizing and addressing the realities of citizens with special needs in advance of any emergency are some of the issues that will be discussed during the conference. Other topics include transportation and evacuation plans for special needs populations; public health challenges in emergency preparedness, the role of non-profit sector relief delivery; using GIS technology; exploring current communication research dealing with vulnerable populations and more.

"One of the most critical challenges ahead in emergency preparedness and response is bringing together researchers, non-profit partners, and practitioners. We can't just keep repeating the same old mistakes--the kind we saw after Hurricane Katrina for example--if we expect to react effectively were a disaster to strike Philadelphia, said Scott Gabriel Knowles, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History and Co-Director of Drexel Engineering Cities Initiative, Drexel University. "Cutting-edge research, like that underway at Drexel University, in communications technology, transportation, mapping and geographic information, the social sciences, and public health needs to find its way into the hands of those public officials and non-profit groups who will be on the front lines of a disaster. This conference aims to break down any barriers to that communication, and create new and critical links between the university and the responders."

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