

FEMA Civil Rights Summit – Speaker Bios

FEMA Civil Rights Summit 4.0 – Environmental Justice

Wednesday, November 1, 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. ET

Thursday, November 2, 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. ET

Speaker Bios



Olugbenga Ajilore, Office of the Undersecretary, Rural Development, United States Department of Agriculture

Olugbenga Ajilore is a senior advisor in the Office of the Undersecretary for Rural Development at the United States Department of Agriculture. Prior to his current role, he was a senior economist at the Center for American Progress and former associate professor of economics at the University of

Toledo. His expertise includes regional economic development, macroeconomic policy, and issues in diversity and inclusion. He has been invited to testify before Congress and has been featured in The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post. He holds a Ph.D in economics from Claremont Graduate University and a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

Selin Cherian-Rivers, Attorney Advisor, DOJ

Selin Cherian-Rivers is an Attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal and Compliance Section. Since 2001, Ms. Cherian-Rivers has provided legal counsel on regulatory and policy matters and conducted administrative investigations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and related statutes and Executive Orders addressing race, color, national origin, and sex discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.

She is the lead attorney in the joint Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services environmental justice investigation into allegations that the Alabama Department of Public Health's operation of its onsite wastewater disposal and infectious diseases and outbreaks programs cause Black residents of Lowndes County, Alabama to have diminished access to adequate sanitation systems and to disproportionately and unjustifiably bear the risk of adverse health effects linked to inadequate onsite wastewater treatment. After an 18-month investigation the United States secured an interim resolution agreement in the investigation – the first-ever environmental justice settlement agreement by the Justice Department under Title VI. Ms. Cherian-Rivers received her J.D. from Howard University School of Law and her B.A. in Journalism from Temple University.





Deanne Criswell

Administrator, FEMA

Ms. Deanne Criswell was unanimously confirmed by the Senate on April 22nd, 2021, as the 12th Administrator of FEMA. Ms. Criswell is the first woman confirmed to serve as the Administrator, where she leads the Nation's efforts in helping people before, during, and after disasters. She brings with her an extensive career in emergency management with over 27 years of experience at all levels of government and the private sector.

Prior to her appointment, Ms. Criswell served as the Commissioner of the New York City Emergency Management Department from 2019 to 2021, where she was responsible for coordinating citywide emergency planning and response for all emergencies. One of her most significant accomplishments was leading the coordination of the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; including preventing the collapse of the healthcare system, making sure no New Yorker went hungry, establishing a first of its kind non-congregate sheltering program, and supporting the country's largest mass fatality program.

Ms. Criswell began her career in emergency management in Aurora, Colorado, where she led strategic change in the City's emergency and disaster planning. During her tenure, Ms. Criswell coordinated transitional housing and family reunification efforts in response to receiving evacuees during the response to Hurricane Katrina. She previously served at FEMA as the leader of one of the Agency's National Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMAT) and as a Federal Coordinating Officer. In this role, Ms. Criswell was the primary Federal representative responsible for leading the agency's response to and recovery from emergencies and major disasters, from severe flooding in North Dakota to hurricanes in South Carolina to fires in Colorado. She also spent two years as an executive in the private sector, providing exceptional technical expertise and the experience necessary to help her clients achieve their critical missions.

Ms. Criswell also proudly served 21 years in the Colorado Air National Guard. She is a veteran of two overseas tours, including as a fire officer in Kuwait immediately following the attacks of September 11th, 2001, and to Qatar in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2010, where she advised senior leadership on fire protection requirements for new and existing military bases in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Ms. Criswell holds a B.S. from Colorado State University, an M.P.A from the University of Colorado – Denver, and an M.A. in Security Studies from the Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security.



Christina Cummings

Vice President Operations, Partnership for Southern Equity

Christina Cummings is the Vice President Operations, Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE). The Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) advances policies and institutional actions that promote racial equity and shared prosperity for all in the growth of metropolitan Atlanta and the American South. She served as the Staff lead for the Justice40 Accelerator to leverage the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 commitment to radically reimagine the existing government resource delivery system as a restorative and reparative framework that better supports Black and historically disinvested communities of color.



Prior to joining PSE, Christina served as the Director for Housing and Community Development for the city of Atlanta and the Deputy Director for Community Development and Regulatory Affairs at the city of South Fulton. Christina’s educational background includes a Master of Public Administration from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, and a BA in Sociology from Georgia State University.



Donna DeFrancesco, Assistant Administrator, FEMA Office of Environmental and Historic Preservation

Ms. DeFrancesco is a leader and technical expert with 28 years’ experience helping people and communities integrate environmental planning and historic preservation with disaster response, recovery, and community resilience. Her experience is inclusive of Federal, state, private and academic sectors. She first joined FEMA in 2011, serving as an Environmental Specialist in Region VIII and an Environmental Advisor for the National Incident Management Assistance Team. For the past 7 years, she has served as the Readiness Branch Chief, Deputy Director, and Acting Director for OEHP. An experienced emergency manager, she has led environmental/historic preservation response and recovery to major Type I incidents including floods, severe storms, hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, landslides, and pandemics.

Prior to joining FEMA, she was and Environmental Program Manager for 10 years for an international engineering and environmental firm, a Riparian and Wetland Program Manager for University of Montana and Private Lands Coordinator for North Dakota Department of Game and Fish.



Dr. Jim Elliott Professor and Chair of Sociology at Rice University

James (Jim) Elliott is Professor and Chair of Sociology at Rice University. His research focuses on social inequality, environmental hazards, and climate adaptation. He has served as a program advisor for the US National Science Foundation and as co-editor of *Sociological Perspectives*, the official journal of the Pacific Sociological Association. His co-authored book *Sites Unseen: Uncovering Hidden Hazards in American Cities* recently won the Robert E. Park Award for best book in community and urban sociology from the American Sociological Association. Current research includes a focus on urban flooding and residential adaptation, including policies and programs of managed retreat.



Marianne Engelman-Lado, Acting Principal Deputy Assistance Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency

Marianne Engelman-Lado joined the Environmental Protection Agency in February, 2021 as Deputy General Counsel of Environmental Initiatives, where she focuses on implementing the Administration’s commitment to equity, environmental justice, and civil rights enforcement, and carrying out the agency’s mission to protect public health and the environment. She recently served as Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator of EPA’s newly launched Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights. She previously directed Environmental Justice Clinic at Vermont and Yale Law Schools and served as Lecturer at both the Yale University School of Public Health and the Yale School of the Environment. Before clinical teaching, she served as senior staff attorney at Earthjustice and as General Counsel at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), a non-profit civil rights law firm. She began her legal career at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF). She recently served as co-chair of the Equity and Environmental Justice Working Group of Connecticut’s Governor’s Council on Climate Change. Marianne has lectured widely and taught graduate, law and undergraduate level courses. She holds a B.A. in government from Cornell University, a J.D. from the University of California at Berkeley, and an M.A. in Politics from Princeton University. Her most recent writing has focused on civil rights enforcement in the environmental justice context.



Sherman Gillums, Jr. Director, FEMA Office of Disability Integration and Coordination

Sherman Gillums Jr. serves as FEMA’s disability coordinator and the director of its Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC). Sherman advises FEMA Administrator Criswell on meeting the Agency’s commitment to equity in emergency management for people with disabilities, including older adults and others with access and functional needs.

Sherman has deployed to response operations for hurricanes Ian and Fiona, deadly tornados in Alabama and Mississippi, and served as the Agency’s lead advisor on disability integration after a train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. In March 2023, Sherman released to the FEMA workforce “A Guide to Meeting the Disability Integration Mission,” his vision that focuses on 14 potential points of inequity that can substantially extend the disaster lifecycle for people with disabilities.

Before joining FEMA, Sherman led strategy and operations for the National Alliance on Mental Illness and was the executive director of Paralyzed Veterans of America and chief strategy and advocacy officer for AMVETS.

A United States veteran, Sherman served for 12 years before medically retiring at the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 2. He holds a graduate degree from the University of San Diego School of Business and completed his executive education at Harvard Business School. He will complete his doctoral studies at the University of Dayton in 2024.





Leo Goldsmith

Doctoral Student at the Yale School of Environment/Board Member of OUT for Sustainability

Leo is a doctoral student at the Yale School of the Environment where they study climate impacts on the social, health, and economic well-being of diverse sexual and gender minorities. Pulling from their academic background and practice in climate science, environmental justice, and LGBTQ+ health, they will use interdisciplinary mixed methods to study their research questions.

Prior to joining the Bell research group in Fall 2023, Leo coordinated an interagency working group on climate and health, three chapters of the Fifth National Climate Assessment (NCA5), and the Belmont Forum Climate, Environment, and Health Collaborative Research Action Round II. He is a sexual and gender minority health technical contributor for the Health chapter of NCA5. They have also previously worked with various environmental justice communities and organizations on environmental health disparities.

Outside of research, Leo collaborates with community organizations and federal agencies to communicate impacts of climate change on sexual and gender minority communities and volunteers as a Board member of OUT for Sustainability. They have a Masters in Environmental Management from the Yale School of the Environment and a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies.



Camille Hadley, Executive Director, Little Growers Inc.

Camille T. Hadley, a passionate advocate for community and environmental justice, recently earned a nomination for the “Lead Brevard’s top 12-4 Under 40” award. Hailing from Compton, CA, she began her journey by actively restoring Compton College’s accreditation and addressing community food insecurity through her Not-For-Profit

Organization, Tartar Marketplace. Camille’s dedication earned her accolades, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Award and recognition as the most improved faith-based organizer by the Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches.

Camille’s commitment to community organizing led her to receive training from the California Endowment Foundation and became a two-time fellow of the Greenlining Economic Summit. Holding a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management from California State University Dominguez Hills, Camille is currently the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Little Growers Inc. in Brevard County, FL., dedicated to tackling pressing environmental challenges.

Her contributions extend to organizations like the Leadership Council for Anthropocene Alliance, the South Brevard NAACP Environmental Justice Committee, and the Sierra Club and Women’s Earth Alliance Grassroots Accelerator for Women Environmental Leaders. Camille’s passion and commitment for environmental justice shine through her active involvement in projects, conferences, and panels, where she shares expertise and strategies for creating sustainable, equitable communities. Her nomination for “Lead Brevard’s Top 12-4 Under 40” underscores her exceptional leadership and dedication to positive change.





Erik Hooks

Deputy Administrator, Office of the Administrator

Erik A. Hooks was appointed as Deputy Administrator of FEMA by President Joseph R. Biden and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in December 2021. Prior to joining FEMA, Mr. Hooks devoted more than 30 years to public service in his home state of North Carolina (N.C.) with a focus on public safety, law enforcement and emergency management.

In 2017, Mr. Hooks was appointed by Gov. Roy Cooper to become the North Carolina Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Advisor, leading the state’s disaster mitigation, response and recovery efforts as the state navigated an increasing number of natural disasters. His responsibilities included cabinet-level leadership for the N.C. Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Section, the N.C. National Guard, the N.C. Office of Recovery and Resilience, the N.C. State Highway Patrol, the N.C. Alcohol Law Enforcement Division, the N.C. State Capitol Police, the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice, the Governor’s Crime Commission, and support divisions within the Department of Public Safety. In this role, he led approximately 27,000 sworn and civilian public safety professionals, as well as approximately 12,000 National Guard soldiers and airmen.

As North Carolina’s State Administrative Agent, Mr. Hooks administered federal funds to state, local and tribal entities. Hooks also chaired the North Carolina State Emergency Response Commission and coordinated law enforcement counterterrorism prevention, preparedness and response training on a statewide basis resulting in a cohesive team response by both law enforcement and emergency first responders to acts of terrorism or a terrorist threat.

Prior to his appointment at North Carolina Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Advisor, Mr. Hooks served for 27 years in the North Carolina Bureau of Investigation, first as a Special Agent before becoming a senior leader at the agency. He has also served on the Executive Committee of the National Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council and is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the FBI National Executive Institute Associates.

Deputy Administrator Hooks holds undergraduate and master’s degrees from North Carolina State University. Additionally, Mr. Hooks successfully completed the FBI National Executive Institute and the Commandant’s National Security Program at the U.S. Army War College.



Tonya Hoover

Deputy U.S. Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration

Tonya Hoover is the deputy U.S. fire administrator at the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). Serving since January 2020 as the senior career federal fire official, administering the day-to-day operations of the USFA.

Chief Hoover’s duties include training of over 100,000 first responders at and through the National Fire Academy (NFA); the National Fire Incident Reporting System, which documents and analyzes 27 million fire department emergency responses a year; the USFA’s fire prevention, public information, and public education programs; and the 26 campus buildings and the grounds of the historic National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Chief Hoover served as the superintendent of the USFA's NFA, focusing on enhancing the ability of fire and emergency services and allied professionals to deal with fire and related emergencies. She has



also served as the California state fire marshal, as well as the board of directors for the National Fire Protection Association and continues engagement with the International Fire Service Training Association.

Chief Hoover received her Master of Business Administration (M.B.A) in Business and Human Resources from the University of Phoenix in 2006 and a B.S. in Technical Education, specializing in Fire Protection and Safety, from Oklahoma State University in 1985.



Dr. Holmes Hummel, PhD, Stanford University

Dr. Holmes Hummel leads programming for Energy Equity & Just Transitions at Stanford University's Institute for Energy. Through courses such as *Quest for Inclusive Clean Energy Economies*, Holmes draws attention to the importance of investment strategies for hazard mitigation, energy resilience, and disaster recovery through the lenses of energy policy, technology, and finance. Previously, Dr. Hummel served as the Senior Policy Advisor in the Department of Energy's Office of Policy & International Affairs (2009-2013), working with the federal policy frameworks for preparedness. In collaboration with field partners, Dr. Hummel is also the founding co-director of Clean Energy Works, a public interest organization that accelerates adoption of inclusive financial solutions for energy upgrades at the grid-edge that improve resiliency, such as inclusive utility investments.



Pier Janrhett

Supervisory Floodplain Management Specialist and Floodplain Management and Insurance Federal Flood Risk Management Standard Specialist, FEMA Region 4

Pier Janrhett serves as the Floodplain Management and Insurance Federal Flood Risk Management Standard Specialist and Supervisory Floodplain Management Specialist in FEMA Region 4. In this capacity, as well as her role as Supervisory Floodplain Management Specialist, Pier coordinates with other federal agencies to build a more resilient future through mitigation.

Pier joined FEMA Region 4 in 2018. She has assisted the State of South Carolina in various capacities including conducting Community Assistance Visits Substantial Damage Assessments while deployed in response to Hurricane Florence. She has also done outreach to work with the Gullah Geechee Community. In addition, she represented Region 4 on the National Training and Education Development Committee and as the Community Assistance Planning for State Support Services Element assistant coordinator. Recently, Pier was selected to participate in the FEMA Region 4 Eagle Leadership 2023 Cohort. Prior to joining Region 4, Pier served as a Floodplain Specialist for the Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Branch for FEMA Region 2. Pier has approximately 15 years of experience in floodplain management with local and federal governments and the private sector. She holds a B.A. from Georgia State University, an M.A. from Mercer University and is a



Certified Floodplain Manager.



Ken Johnson, Division Director, External Civil Rights Division, FEMA Office of Equal Rights

Ken Johnson is the Division Director, External Civil Rights Division, FEMA Office of Equal Rights. Prior to joining FEMA, Ken served for over fifteen years as a Section Chief in the HHS Office for Civil Rights, where he supervised the development of resolution agreements and corrective action closure letters ensuring compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964's protections against race, color, and national origin discrimination; organized a national compliance review of forty-six hospitals, "Advancing Effective Communication in Critical Access Hospitals"; and served as a contributor to the HHS Office of Minority Health's e-learning courses, "Promotores de Salud/Community Health Workers," and "Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Maternal Health Care." Previously, Ken served for nine years as a trial attorney in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, where he enforced Title VI, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Ken began his federal career as a GS-0905-11 law clerk to the Honorable Damon J. Keith, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He is a graduate of the California State University, Fullerton, and Harvard Law School.



Marlene 'MJ' Johnson-Moore Compliance Unit Chief, FEMA External Civil Rights Division of the Office of Equal Rights

Marlene 'MJ' Johnson-Moore joined FEMA in March 2022 as the Compliance Unit chief in the External Civil Rights Division of the Office of Equal Rights. The unit creates and reviews civil rights policies and conducts compliance reviews of FEMA's grant recipients to ensure nondiscrimination, equity, and compliance with civil rights laws, regulations, and executive actions by FEMA programs.

Prior to coming to FEMA, MJ worked as acting Programs and Compliance Branch chief for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. While at HUD, she conducted investigations and comprehensive compliance reviews to enforce the Fair Housing Act and other civil rights and equal opportunity laws and regulations.

MJ also serves as director of the Equal Opportunity Program for the South Carolina Air National Guard (SCANG). She executes the program's objectives to eliminate unlawful discrimination against military members based on race, color, sex, national origin or religion. She previously worked as an emergency manager for the SCANG where she performed readiness training and disaster preparedness functions and monitored force protection, survivability, and deployment capabilities for 1,200 military personnel. MJ earned dual bachelor's degrees in business administration and hospitality management from the College of Charleston and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law.



Kelbie Kennedy

National Tribal Affairs Advocate, Office of External Affairs

Kelbie Kennedy has joined FEMA as the first National Tribal Affairs Advocate. She is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and was born and raised on her Tribal Nation’s reservation in Southeast, Oklahoma. She received her J.D. and certificate in American Indian Law from the University of Oklahoma, College of Law. Before joining the FEMA team, Ms. Kennedy spent over four years working in Washington D.C. for the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) as the Policy Manager and Policy Lead – National Security and Community Safety. Kelbie brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from her time in Indian Country and from the many Tribal Nations she has worked with over the years. Ms. Kennedy is the first tribal affairs political appointee in the history of FEMA and DHS.



Dr. Kevin Kupietz

Elizabeth City State University (ECSU) Department of Aviation and Emergency Management

Dr. Kevin Kupietz is Chair of the Elizabeth City State University (ECSU) Department of Aviation and Emergency Management. He is a NC certified Firefighter/Paramedic with over thirty years of emergency response experience with local, state, and federal agencies. He comes with a diverse emergency response and educational background with teaching certifications in a variety of emergency service topics. He has been involved in higher education for more than twenty years teaching initial courses for job certifications, specialized fire/rescue classes as well as graduate and under-graduate programs, literally having taught thousands of students. His academic interests include emergency responder safety, functional needs in disasters, preparedness education, business resiliency, drones, and leadership. He has been a recognized speaker at local, state, and national venues in the realm of public safety. He is a big believer in the power of education to make communities safer through cooperative ventures. He is known for his passion in passing on knowledge to others, believing that knowledge is power. He lives by the saying that if you are not having fun, you are not doing it right and tries to apply this saying in everything that he does.



Megan Nibley, Program Analyst, HUD

Megan Nibley joined HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) in October 2016 as a Presidential Management Fellow. In her current role as a Program Analyst in the Program Standards and Compliance Division, Megan conducts nation-wide front-end civil rights reviews and provides guidance, education, and training on fair housing and equity to HUD-funded programs, stakeholders, and regional FHEO staff. She specializes in disaster recovery and environmental justice issues, including Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funding and HUD’s Justice40 initiatives.

She previously served as an Equal Opportunity Specialist, investigating discrimination complaints, ensuring compliance with civil rights laws, and managing federal grants and



contracts. Before joining HUD, she was a child and family therapist in Washington, DC and Philadelphia.

Megan earned a bachelor's degree in Cultural Anthropology from James Madison University and a Master of Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania.



Victoria Salinas

Deputy Administrator (Acting), Resilience

Deputy Administrator (Acting) Victoria Salinas has worked with communities across the United States and internationally to build resilience and recover after major disasters. Passionate about driving social impact centered in partnership and community resilience, she has a steadfast focus on ensuring equitable outcomes for all.

Ms. Salinas serves at DHS FEMA as the Associate Administrator for Resilience. FEMA Resilience aims to help communities across the United States equitably adapt, survive, recover, and thrive in the face of natural disasters, climate change, and security threats, through a variety of programs that aim to help communities better understand their risk; transfer risk through insurance; and build the capacity to prepare, protect, respond, and recover from disasters.

Ms. Salinas has Previously served as the Chief Resilience Officer and Deputy City Administrator for Oakland, California. At the World Bank, the United Nations, and in her previous experience at FEMA, she worked alongside officials at all levels of government to plan recovery efforts following major disasters.

Ms. Salinas has a master's degree in public policy from Harvard Kennedy School and a bachelor's degree from the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.



Leslie Saucedo

Director of the Office of Equal Rights, Office of the Administrator

Ms. Saucedo currently serves as the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Office of Equal Rights (OER). In the role, she leads efforts to advance diversity, inclusion, accessibility and equity for FEMA employees and members of the public. Ms. Saucedo also serves as the Director of OER's External Civil Rights Division (ECD) where she leads civil rights enforcement and compliance efforts and equity initiatives for FEMA's external facing programs and activities.

Prior to these positions, she served as the Senior Advisor within the United States (U.S.) Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Departmental Equal Employment Opportunity and the Deputy Assistant Director and embedded Attorney Advisor within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of Diversity and Civil Rights.

In these roles, she led efforts to develop and enhance a diverse and inclusive workplace culture and advance civil rights and equity. Earlier in her career, Ms. Saucedo served as an Attorney Advisor for the U.S. Department of Commerce focused on employment matters and practiced law in the private sector representing corporations and individuals. Ms. Saucedo obtained her Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the Pennsylvania State University and her Juris Doctorate



(J.D.) from the George Washington University Law School.



Maria Sharova, Fellow Program Manager, Thriving Earth Exchange

Maria Sharova is Thriving Earth Exchange’s Community Science Fellow Program Manager. She is responsible for supporting and facilitating the growing network of fellows as they manage community science projects.

This includes enhancing the resources, support, and opportunities we share with our network of Fellows and the communities they serve. She is particularly interested in facilitating science engagement through effective project design, management, and evaluation.

Maria worked with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, Ecological Society of America, and CleanAIRE NC before joining AGU’s Thriving Earth Exchange team. She holds a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Maryland, College Park and an M.S. in Fisheries, Wildlife, Conservation Biology from North Carolina State University.



Elaine Ulrich, Senior Advisor, Preparedness, Policy and Risk Analysis, Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Responses

Dr. Elaine Ulrich is a Senior Advisor for the Preparedness, Policy and Risk Analysis for the [Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Responses](#) at the U.S. Department of Energy. She formerly led the balance of systems/soft costs team that works to reduce the non-hardware (soft costs) of solar and lower barriers to U.S. solar adoption. She recently served as a Senior Advisor for Energy in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

A former American Physical Society/American Association for the Advancement of Science policy fellow and IREC “Energy Hero,” Elaine has spent the past several years working on renewable energy. She previously held positions in the office of former U.S. Senator Ken Salazar, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science and Technology, the Energy Department’s Office of Strategic Planning and Analysis, and in the office of U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords, where she worked to build a comprehensive solar energy portfolio.

She holds a B.A. in physics from Wellesley College and a Ph.D. in optical science from the University of Arizona.





Zachary Usher, Deputy Director, FEMA Individual Assistance

Zach Usher currently serves as the Deputy Director for Individual Assistance at FEMA. He previously served as the Branch Chief for the Mass Care, Voluntary Agency Coordination and Community Services Branch, where he led a team of more than 50 staff managing programs supporting disaster survivors with shelter; food; rebuilding assistance; crisis counseling; disaster case management; legal services; and unemployment assistance.

During his FEMA career, he has served in leadership roles overseeing functions in training development and delivery; recovery policy development; disaster recovery center operations; and voluntary agency coordination. During Superstorm Sandy, Zach served as the mitigation advisor to the Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator in New York State.

Prior to Superstorm Sandy, he supported legislative reform efforts for the National Flood Insurance Program and served in a variety of roles within FEMA's Mitigation Directorate at FEMA Headquarters and FEMA Region 2. Zach's first FEMA disaster assignment was DR-1437, Hurricane Lili operations in Louisiana. In the private sector, prior to joining FEMA, he provided management engineering and technical services on mitigation and recovery related contracts.

Zach has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Washington and Lee University. He currently resides in Montgomery County, Maryland with his family.



Kya Williams, Community Outreach Manager, Environmental Protection Network

Kya trains and mentors other EPN associates across the country and coordinates their work, creating new and deeper connections between communities of color and low-income communities in the 10 EPA regions, EPA alumni with decades of expertise, and other allies to assist with community-identified projects. She is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University. She majored in Psychology with a focus in Women's and Gender Studies. Prior to working at EPN, she worked with organizations such as the National Domestic Workers Alliance, Care In Action, and The Feminist Majority. While working with The Feminist Majority, she was able to take part in Ghazala Hashmi's Senate campaign, which resulted in the first Muslim woman elected to the Virginia Senate. Kya also worked as a coach program and Campaign Manager Training program, and played a key role in the organization and creation of the Girls Take Granby women's march in Norfolk, Virginia.