



## Summit Speakers

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FEMA's Office of External Affairs is proud to bring the following leaders from across government, the private and non-profits sectors, and academia together for the 2024 FEMA Risk Communications, Crisis Communications, and Community Engagement Summit.



### Justin Ángel Knighten

Associate Administrator  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Justin Ángel Knighten serves as the Associate Administrator of the Office of External Affairs for FEMA. Mr. Knighten is a public affairs and communications strategist, storyteller, and advocate who works to advance social justice, inclusion, and human rights. With a career based on cross-sector experience and having served as a Mayoral, Gubernatorial, and currently as a Presidential appointee in the Biden-Harris Administration. Mr. Knighten is driven by complex challenges, leading teams and rethinking what's possible to achieve results. Mr. Knighten oversees teams that engage external partners and carry the narrative of the agency, including communications, public affairs, intergovernmental affairs, and congressional affairs.



### Administrator Deanne Criswell

Administrator  
FEMA

Deanne Criswell was unanimously confirmed by the Senate on April 22, 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 public service, with serving 30 years at all levels of government. 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. Ms. Criswell began her career in emergency management in Aurora, Colorado, where she led strategic change in the city's emergency and disaster planning. Ms. Criswell also proudly served 21 years in the Colorado Air National Guard.



**Karine Jean-Pierre**

Press Secretary  
White House

Karine Jean-Pierre is currently the Press Secretary and Assistant to the President. She is the first Black person and first openly queer person to serve as the White House Press Secretary. Karine is a long-time advisor to President Biden, having served in senior communication and political roles in the Biden Administration, the Biden campaign, and in the Obama Administration.

Prior to her role on the campaign, she served as Chief Public Affairs Officer for MoveOn.org and an NBC and MSNBC Political Analyst. Jean-Pierre served as Regional Political Director for the White House Office of Political Affairs during the Obama-Biden administration and as Deputy Battleground States Director for President Obama's 2012 re-election campaign. She served as Southeast Regional Political Director for President Obama's 2008 campaign, Deputy Campaign Manager for Martin O'Malley for President, Campaign Manager for the ACLU's Reproductive Freedom Initiative, and Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Legislative and Budget Affairs for two members in the New York City Council.

Previously, she worked at the Center for Community and Corporate Ethics, pushing major companies to change their business practices, and is a published author. Born in Martinique and raised in New York, Jean-Pierre is a graduate of Columbia University.



**Monica Sanders**

Founder, The Undivide Project  
Georgetown University

Monica Sanders is the founder of the “The Undivide Project”, an organization dedicated to creating climate resilience in underserved communities via Internet infrastructure and service. She also holds a faculty appointment at the Georgetown University Law Center, manages a university program, and is a Senior Fellow at the Tulane University Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy. Professor Sanders has served as a National Preparedness Month spokesperson. Professor Sanders’ prior experience includes Senior Committee Counsel for both the House of Representatives and Senate Committees on Homeland Security. In those roles, she focused on oversight of disaster response and recovery programs, cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure protection. She also served as the Senior Legal Advisor for International Response and Programs at the American Red Cross, and as an attorney for the Small Business Administration during the Hurricane Maria and western wildfires responses. Professor Sanders also studied security and defense–civilian coordination in the European Union Visitor’s Program and remains involved in crisis response operations as part of the Team Rubicon USA, UNDP and Department of State experts’ rosters.



**Matthew Miller**

Spokesperson  
U.S. Department of State

Matthew Miller serves as the Spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State. He previously served as a special advisor to the National Security Council at the White House, leading the U.S. government’s communications and legislative affairs on the war in Ukraine. During the Biden transition, Mr. Miller ran Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s confirmation. Mr. Miller served as the Director of the Office of Public Affairs at the Department of Justice during the Obama administration and has worked in leadership positions in both the U.S. House and Senate, serving as communications director for the House Democratic Caucus and for Senator Charles Schumer at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. Mr. Miller has also worked for Senator Robert Menendez and for numerous political campaigns, including the 2004 Kerry presidential campaign and the 2012 Obama campaign. He is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin.



**Angela Barranco**

Executive Director for North America  
Climate Group

Angela Barranco is the Executive Director for North America at the Climate Group. She brings over two decades of political and policy management experience, including several years in problem-solving, campaign-driven, solutions-focused work on climate, clean energy, clean cars and protecting natural resources, most recently as Undersecretary of the California Natural Resources Agency. Prior to CNRA, Ms. Barranco served as Chief Executive for River LA and the Deputy Chief of Staff at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Ms. Barranco also led climate and environment outreach for the Obama White House as Associate Director for Public Engagement of the White House Council of Environmental Quality.



**Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell**

U.S. Fire Administrator  
U.S. Fire Administration

Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell serves as the U.S. Fire Administrator. She is considered an expert in executive leadership, emergency response system evaluation, public safety resource deployment, community risk assessment, data science/analytics, strategic planning, costs and benefits analysis, advocacy, consensus building, policy development and implementation, and generational differences in the workplace. As a Doctor of Public Health and a data scientist, Dr. Moore-Merrell recently served on the Biden-Harris Transition Team to conduct agency review for the DHS/FEMA as part of the COVID-19 response planning. She has also served on the Public Safety Committee of the transition teams for both the mayor of New York City (2013) and the mayor of the District of Columbia (2015). During her 26 years at the International Association of Fire Fighters, Dr. Moore-Merrell spent more than 17 years leading a research team made up of international fire service organizations and other partners in producing resources have changed the face of fire and EMS deployment in countries throughout the world.



**Summer Sylva**

Maui Wildfires Cultural Protocol Task Force Lead and Senior Advisor for Native Hawaiian Affairs  
U.S. Department of Interior

Summer Lee Haunani Sylva serves as the Maui Wildfires Cultural Task Force Lead and is the Senior Advisor for Native Hawaiian Affairs in the U.S. Department of Interior. Ms. Sylva is a Native Hawaiian attorney from Waimānalo, O‘ahu who most recently served as the executive director of the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation (NHLC). Ms. Sylva joins Interior with more than a decade of experience litigating before federal and state courts in Hawai‘i, New York and New Jersey. During her tenure at NHLC, Ms. Sylva led litigation efforts on Native Hawaiian rights issues, including water rights, state and federal government entitlement programs, public trust and historic native land claims.



**Marcus Coleman**

Director  
DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

Marcus Coleman serves as the Director for the Department of Homeland Security Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (DHS Partnerships Center), one of several centers of the White House Office of Faith-Based & Neighborhood Partnerships. Originally from Tucson, Arizona, Mr. Coleman has served at the intersection of building public private partnerships with faith-based and non-profit organizations for more than 15 years. As the Director of the DHS Partnerships Center, he leads a team focused on building partnerships alongside others at FEMA and DHS to advance equity in emergency management and strengths climate resilience, improving the safety and security of the places where people worship, fellowship, and serve. Mr. Coleman and his team provide technical assistance to emergency managers, first responders, and national security professionals on engaging faith-based and community organizations across DHS.



**Dr. Atyia Martin**

Chief Executive Officer and Founder  
All Aces, Inc.



Dr. Atyia Martin is the CEO and Founder of All Aces, Inc., an alternative to traditional diversity, equity, and inclusion consulting and professional development. Their online learning community, IntentionallyAct.com, supports their mission to activate consciousness, catalyze critical thinking, and transform capabilities that advance racial equity and build resilience. As a certified emergency manager, Dr. Martin's previous professional roles include Chief Resilience Officer for the City of Boston, director of the Office of Public Health Preparedness at the Boston Public Health Commission, and adjunct faculty in the Master of Homeland Security and Public Policy programs at Northeastern University. Dr. Martin has also held positions at the Boston Police Department's Boston Regional Intelligence Center; City of Boston's Mayor's Office of Emergency Management; the Federal Bureau of Investigations; the Air Force as active duty assigned to the National Security Agency; and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City.



### **Maricela Rodriguez**

Senior Advisor for Civic Engagement and Strategic Partnerships  
Office of California Governor Newsom

Maricela Rodriguez is the Senior Advisor for Civic Engagement and Strategic Partnerships at the Office of California's Governor Gavin Newsom. In the governor's office, Ms. Rodriguez provides strategic communication support on issues including immigration, safe drinking water, and affordable health care for undocumented Californians. She also helps oversee major state public awareness campaigns — the 2020 census topping the list. In 2011, Ms. Rodriguez worked for The California Endowment, a nonprofit focused on expanding health care to underserved communities. There, she spearheaded #Health4All, which raised awareness about the importance of expanding access to affordable health care to undocumented Californians, as well as Asegúrate, a public awareness campaign developed in conjunction with the Affordable Care Act rollout, which contributed to the now over 4 million people enrolled in Medi-Cal across the state. Previously, Ms. Rodriguez worked for California First Lady Maria Shriver where she helped create WE Connect, an initiative connecting low-income families to important programs such as CalFresh and Medi-Cal, which support health and financial security.

## Michael S. George



Associate Administrator  
Office of National Continuity Programs, FEMA

Michael S. George serves as the Associate Administrator for the Office of National Continuity Programs (ONCP). In this role, Mr. George is charged with leading the Federal government’s national continuity activities, namely coordinating the development, implementation, execution, and assessment of the continuity programs for the Federal executive branch, and state, local, territorial, and tribal nations (FSLTT). Mr. George is also responsible for ensuring that the President, FSLTT governments, and agencies can provide timely and effective alerts and warnings regarding natural disaster, acts of terrorism, and other threats to public safety.



## Christian L. Tom

Director  
White House Office of Digital Strategy

Christian L. Tom serves as the White House Director of Digital Strategy. Mr. Tom previously served in the Biden White House as special assistant to the president and deputy director of digital strategy before leaving in August 2022 to serve as head of Americas for the McCourt Institute. Mr. Tom first joined the White House in 2021 after working on Biden’s presidential campaign as head of digital partnerships and serving as digital director of his inaugural committee. He has previously worked for SVP, The Dodo, NowThis, Twitter and Google.



## Tré Borden

Artist and Founder  
Tre Borden / Co

Tré Borden is an artist, producer, and founder of Tre Borden / Co. For over 10 years, Mr. Borden has worked with a wide range of artists, companies, organizations and communities to collaborate and realize their values through creative projects. Mr. Borden creates and produces large-scale artworks and ambitious public-engagement campaigns. His portfolio includes large-scale commissions for private spaces, permanent and temporary public artworks, mission-driven media and technology projects, community engagement campaigns and programming, and thought-leader focused convenings.



### **Kelbie Kennedy**

National Tribal Affairs Advocate  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Kelbie Kennedy is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and was born and raised on her Tribal Nation's reservation in Southeast, Oklahoma. On October 11, 2022, President Biden appointed Ms. Kennedy as the first tribal affairs political appointee in the history of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security. As the first FEMA National Tribal Affairs Advocate, Ms. Kennedy will directly advise the Administrator and the Agency on all tribal affairs and work to ensure that FEMA lives up to its treaty responsibilities to all Tribal Nations. Ms. Kennedy will also work across the Agency to implement the first FEMA National Tribal Strategy. 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. Ms. Kennedy played pivotal role in the efforts to reauthorize the 2022 Violence Against Women Act, which restored Tribal Nation's criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians for certain crimes. Before working at NCAI, Ms. Kennedy worked as the Assistant Attorney General for Chuuk State in the Federated States of Micronesia.





## Lucy Beadnell

Director of Advocacy  
Arc of Northern Virginia

Lucy Beadnell is the Director of Advocacy at The Arc of Northern Virginia where she oversees grassroots advocacy campaigns for people with developmental disabilities and creates informational resources for people with disabilities and their families. Lucy began volunteering with Arcs in college while studying vulnerable populations. She found her home in the mission of ensuring all human and civil rights for people with disabilities are respected. She has worked in residential settings for people with complex medical needs, as a case manager for individuals with public supports, and as a public guardian focused on empowering individuals to grow their self-advocacy skills. She has worked closely with families whose loved ones are leaving institutions, state and local legislators, and our community at large to share the mission of disability inclusion. Lucy is focusing a lot of efforts on Supported Decision Making, ensuring people with disabilities have independent and integrated housing, and reforming our justice system to better recognize and meet the needs of the disability community. She loves talking to people with disabilities and helping them share their stories to affect change. As a result of her efforts, she was selected as a 2018 40 Under 40 Awardee by the Leadership Center for Excellence and a 2020 40 Under 40 Awardee by the Washington Business Journal. Lucy is a mom of three adorable kids and lives with her family in South Arlington.



## Dzu Bui

SVP Group Campaign Director  
Ad Council

Dzu Bui is the Senior Vice President and Group Campaign Director at the Ad Council. Mr. Bui has nearly two decades of experience in driving consumer behavior change through integrated communications campaigns built on collaboration, data insights, an innovative mindset, a comfort with ambiguity, and an eye for efficiency. Throughout his career at the Ad Council, Mr. Bui led, informed and produced over 50 campaigns for social good, designed to

drive attitudinal and behavioral change. Mr. Bui has collaborated closely with numerous national nonprofit organizations and foundations, US government agencies, and corporate brands to connect their missions and organizational objectives with purpose-driven marketing solutions.



**Linda Thomas Brooks**

Chief Executive Officer  
Public Relations Society of America, Inc.

Linda Thomas Brooks is the Chief Executive Officer of PRSA, the nation’s leading association serving nearly 25,000 public relations and communications professionals and student members. Throughout her multi-faceted career, Ms. Thomas Brooks has operated at the intersection of marketing, media, communications and technology. Prior to joining PRSA, her key roles included a four-year term as President and CEO of the Association of Magazine Media, an organization which provided business, research, marketing and government affairs support to hundreds of media companies. Ms. Thomas Brooks also served as Executive Vice President, Managing Director of General Motors Mediaworks, a media strategy and investment unit representing all GM divisions and responsible for approximately \$750 million in annual media spending. She also worked in other executive roles in advertising agencies and technology companies. Ms. Thomas Brooks is also one of the founding executives of the non-profit Institute for Advertising Ethics.



**Matthew Behnke**

Director, Communications Division  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Matthew Behnke serves as the Director of the Communications Division at FEMA’s Office of External Affairs. Mr. Behnke has worked in emergency management for over 20 years. He previously served as the Senior Advisor for the FEMA Federal Insurance Division in support of the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration’s national flood insurance program. In this role, Mr. Behnke was the lead for the agency’s priority on closing the insurance gap. Mr.

Behnke was also part of FEMA's Intergovernmental Affairs Division and served as the Agency's small state and rural advocate. Within Intergovernmental Affairs, Mr. Behnke he worked as FEMA's liaison to state, local, tribal, and territorial government officials and various stakeholder associations. Additionally, he supported FEMA's Response and Recovery Directorate, coordinating FEMA's recommendations to Presidential on federal disaster declarations.



### **Rashidah (McCoy) Billups**

Deputy Media Branch Chief  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Rashidah (McCoy) Billups serves as the Deputy Media Branch Chief in FEMA's Office of External Affairs. Ms. Billups is a senior marketing communications professional with almost 10 years of experience in public relations, advocacy, digital media, and traditional communications. In her role, she is responsible for executing comprehensive, integrated digital outreach and engagement strategies to help deepen engagement for digital experiences on social media platforms. She came to FEMA after working on a variety of communications campaigns, advocacy issues, national policy advancements, digital marketing initiatives, and educational developmental concepts for FleishmanHillard, Kivvit, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, Communities in Schools/National Office, and Independent Sector. Ms. Billups holds a Master's in Journalism with a concentration on International Public Relations from West Virginia University. She was also named one of Association Forum's 2022 Forty Under 40 recipients.



### **Sara Smith**

Manager of Social Listening & Analytics  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Sara Smith serves as team lead for FEMA's Social Listening and Analytics team in the Office of External Affairs. Ms. Smith has more than nine years of experience building one of the most comprehensive social listening programs in the Federal government. Working across divisions and offices, her team strives to provide actionable insights and identify information gaps, leading to more engaging and thoughtful messaging during critical moments. Ms. Smith has also spent time in the private sector helping Fortune 500 companies better understand how or when to engage

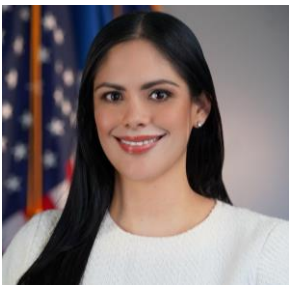
in divisive or complex online conversations. She is passionate about sharing her knowledge and expertise with others and helping them use social listening and analytics to improve strategic communications and engagement.



**Lucas Hitt**

Deputy Associate Administrator  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Lucas Hitt serves as the Deputy Associate Administrator of FEMA Office of External Affairs. Mr. Hitt brings nearly two decades of experience in public sector communications, developed across roles in government, private and non-profit sectors. From 2010 to 2021 Mr. Hitt served in various roles at the U.S. Department of Commerce, most recently as the Chief of Communications to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, one of the nation’s premiere statistical agencies. Prior to joining the Commerce Department, Mr. Hitt advised state and local governments, non-profits, and corporations on strategic communications, political strategy, and government affairs. He is the former member of the legislative team at the Air Force Association and a former aide to U.S. Senator Ernest “Fritz” Hollings of South Carolina.



**Margarita Varela-Rosa**

Congressional Affairs Director  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Margarita-Varela Rosa serves as FEMA’s Director of Congressional Affairs. Appointed by the Biden-Harris Administration, oversees FEMA’s legislative activities and engagement with Congress. Ms. Varela Rosa was instrumental as the Deputy Chief Counsel at the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, where she propelled significant legislation focused on the climate crisis, conservation of natural resources, environmental justice, and the needs of Indigenous Peoples and residents of U.S. Territories. Her career track also includes impactful contributions as an Operations Research Analyst at the Department of Homeland Security Headquarters and as an Interagency Agreements Manager at the Department of the Navy.



**Saskia Carusi**

Deputy Chief  
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Saskia Carusi is the Deputy Chief of the Regional Office for the Americas and Caribbean at the United National Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). Ms. Carusi has worked with international NGOs and the UN along with communities, local, national and regional organizations to achieve a sustainable world with less disaster losses. Ms. Carusi works at the intersection of sustainable development, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction She has experience leading teams, mobilizing resources, innovative communication, organizing events, facilitating capacity development and learning processes.



**Gloria Huang**

Digital Engagement and Analytics Branch Chief  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Gloria Huang serves as the Digital Engagement and Analytics Branch Chief for FEMA where she oversees the agency’s primary websites, mobile app, text messaging and other digital tools. Ms. Huang also leads the social listening, media analysis and data analytics team that provides critical situational awareness during disasters and evaluates the effectiveness of communications efforts. Previously, she worked at the American Red Cross as the senior officer for Humanitarian Social Engagement. Ms. Huang is a passionate advocate for the use of digital platforms to build trust among communities and improve public service.



## Dr. Rupali Limaye



Associate Professor, Department of International Health  
Johns Hopkins University

Rupali J. Limaye, PhD, MPH, MA, is an Associate Professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, in the Departments of International Health, Epidemiology, and Health, Behavior and Society. Dr. Limaye also serves as the Associate Chair for Research for the Department of International Health. An expert in vaccine behavior and decision-making, including vaccine hesitancy and acceptance, she serves as the Deputy Director of the International Vaccine Access Center. Primarily focusing on infectious diseases, Dr. Limaye is a social and behavioral scientist and health communication scholar. Her mixed-method work examines how various influences affect health behavior and how to leverage those influences to affect positive behavior change. Dr. Limaye also studies how health information can best be communicated to individuals in different contexts and through different channels.



## Joseph Trujillo Falcon

Incoming Distinguished Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of Climate,  
Meteorology, and Atmospheric Sciences & Department of Communication  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Joseph Trujillo-Falcón is a bilingual meteorologist and conducts bilingual disaster communication research at the Cooperative Institute for Severe and High-Impact Weather Research and Operations (CIWRO), in partnership with the NOAA National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) and the NWS Storm Prediction Center (SPC). Under the CIWRO/NSSL Behavioral Insights Unit, he examines how U.S. Spanish speakers receive, understand, and respond to extreme weather hazards in a changing climate. His research has resulted in significant policy and operational advances across NOAA, earning him the 2022 American Meteorological Society (AMS) Award for Early Career Professional Achievement for his innovative contributions in the field of risk communication. Mr. Trujillo-Falcón is also the chairperson of the AMS Committee for Hispanic and Latinx Advancement, where he works with scientific professionals from various domains to establish a Latinx joint network and expand resources for bilingual

meteorologists across the country. Beyond the research landscape, he is a bilingual meteorologist for MyRadar, a popular weather application downloaded by 50 million users and leads Spanish-language series and podcasts that reach international audiences. This summer, he will join the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign as a Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellow, transitioning to a tenure-track professor role at the end of the program.



### **Gretchen Michael**

Deputy Director of Public Affairs and Planning  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Gretchen Michael, J.D., serves as the Deputy Director of Public Affairs and Planning at FEMA's Office of External Affairs, where she leads the agency's messaging strategy to ensure effective communication with the public, media, and stakeholders. Previously, Ms. Michael was the Director of Communications at the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), managing strategic communications during major public health crises, including the Covid-19 pandemic and mpox outbreak. During the early Covid-19 pandemic, Ms. Michael led an HHS intra-agency team to facilitate public affairs efforts for the repatriation of over 2,000 Americans from Wuhan, China, and cruise ships to U.S. military bases. She also played a key role in the Countermeasure Acceleration Group and later H-CORE, coordinating interagency communications for the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines and therapeutics, working with entities such as the DOD, the White House Covid-19 Task Force, and various public and private sector partners. With extensive experience in managing public affairs for various crises, including Superstorm Sandy, the H1N1 pandemic, the January 2010 Haiti earthquake, the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, and the Flint, Michigan water crisis, Ms. Michael has a proven track record in public health communications.

## Jessica Wieder



Director of Incident Communications Planning  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Jessica Wieder serves as the Director of Incident Communications Planning in FEMA’s Office of External Affairs. Ms. Wieder previously served as FEMA’s Deputy Director of Communications and Acting Deputy Director of Public Affairs and Planning. Prior to joining FEMA, Ms. Wieder was the Director of the Center for Radiation Information and Outreach at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) where she served as EPA’s senior radiation public information officer during the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, facilitated international panels on emergency response public communication, and led the public communications contingency planning teams for the 2011 and 2020 Mars launches. With two decades of public service experience, Ms. Wieder remains dedicated to her passion for translating complex information into accessible content, empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health and safety.



## Dr. Vincent Covello

Founder and Director  
Centers for Risk Communications

Dr. Vincent Covello is the Founder and Director of the Center for Risk Communication. Dr. Covello is one of the world’s leading experts and practitioners on risk, high stress, and crisis communications. He is the author of more than 150 articles in scientific journals and the author/editor of more than 20 books. His most recent book is titled: “Communicating in Risk, Crisis, and High Stress Situations: Evidence-Based Strategies and Practice” (Wiley Publishing Co./IEEE Press, 2022). Dr. Covello is a consultant, writer, speaker, and teacher. He is a frequent keynote speaker and has conducted communication skills training for thousands. Dr. Covello has served as a risk, high concern, and crisis communications adviser to numerous public and private sectors organizations. His work has

been applied nationally and globally to a wide range of topics, including radiological incidents, disease outbreaks, industrial accidents, water contamination, air pollution, food safety, climate change, physician-patient communications, and organizational change.



**Dr. Micki Olson**

Senior Researcher  
Emergency and Risk Communication Message Testing Laboratory  
University of Albany

Dr. Micki Olson is a Senior Researcher in the Emergency and Risk Communication Testing Laboratory at the University at Albany. With over 10 years of experience as a communication researcher, she specializes in crafting effective alert and warning messages for a range of risks, from natural hazards to public health emergencies. Her research focuses on understanding how communication influences people’s responses to risks and developing clear, accessible messages for imminent threats. Overall, Dr. Olson enjoys working firsthand with emergency management professionals to improve the effectiveness of their messages, ensuring that critical information is conveyed clearly and accurately. This collaborative approach allows her to leverage her expertise in communication research to develop messages that resonate with diverse audiences and facilitate informed decision-making.



**Vivi Siegel**

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Lead, National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Vivi Siegel, MPH, serves as Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Lead, National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Ms. Siegel focuses on using risk communication principles to help stakeholders understand and deal with health uncertainties surrounding environmental events and exposures, and to take actions to protect themselves and others. Ms. Siegel helps lead CDC communications responses for natural, chemical and radiological emergencies, including the 2011 Fukushima response, and recently, Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, Florence and Michael.

## Dr. Ceeon Quiett Smith



Executive Vice President, Student Success and Operations  
Dillard University

Dr. Smith is the Executive Vice President for Student Success and Operations at Dillard University. She has served as an exchange detail in the Office of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, supporting the Division of Civil Rights with strategy development and program implementation efforts to enhance and increase civil rights compliance activities specific to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Implementation, with a focus on the technical assistance and contract equity for Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Smith holds memberships with the HBCU Emergency Management Workforce Consortium, FEMA Region 6 Higher Ed Collaborative, Southwest Education Council for Journalism & Mass Communication Association, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., and The Links, Inc.



## Han Nguyen

Associate Administrator, Office of Communications and Public Liaison  
U.S. Small Business Administration

Han Nguyen currently serves as associate administrator to Administrator Isabel Casillas Guzman, head of the U.S. Small Business Administration and member of President Biden's Cabinet. During his time at the SBA, among other key initiatives, he spearheaded and oversaw the agency's communications and outreach strategies that launched \$35 billion in small business aid programs that helped save thousands of businesses across the nation and fueled a historic economic recovery. As a senior executive and Biden Administration appointee, Han continues to play a pivotal role in shaping and directing cabinet-level communications strategy, overseeing external, crisis, digital, policy, and marketing strategies.



## Tim Robustelli



Senior Policy Analyst  
New America

Tim Robustelli is a senior policy analyst for the Future of Land and Housing program at New America. He conducts research and policy analysis on housing, land, and property rights issues both in the U.S. and internationally. His work includes research on migration due to climate change and community responses to disaster and crises. Mr. Robustelli has written for the Washington Post, Politico, the Hill, Slate, and CNN, among other publications.



## Dr. Tim Frazier

Professor and the Faculty Director, Emergency Management Program  
Georgetown University

Dr. Tim Frazier is a Professor, Senior Level Administrator, and the Faculty Director of the Emergency and Disaster Management Program at Georgetown University. Dr. Frazier's doctoral degree specialization is in Human/Environment Interaction focusing on research concerning differential vulnerability and resilience of marginalized populations to climate change and natural hazards. His research uses GIS-based climate modeling, spatial analysis, and other quantitative geospatial approaches to determine global and environmental change stressors and then qualitative methodologies to explore the impacts of these stressors on risk, societal vulnerability, community resilience and adaptation, primarily from a socioeconomic perspective. The primary focus of Dr. Frazier's research is to help communities increase their resilience to natural hazards and climate change through the development of science and policies that are socially and environmentally just.



### **April Wood**

President and CEO  
National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)

April Wood is the President and CEO of National VOAD. Ms. Wood has nearly 20 years of non-profit experience leading national-level initiatives and cultivating executive partnerships. Most recently, Ms. Wood served as Senior Director, External Program Services, Disaster Operations for the American Red Cross National Headquarters.



### **Manny Centeno**

Director  
Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), FEMA

Manny Centeno serves as the Director of Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) at FEMA. Prior to becoming Director, Manny worked at FEMA since June 2010 as the Office of National Continuity Programs, IPAWS Program Manager. His work has helped to further the National Public Warning System and the Primary Entry Point system to ensure that presidential communications can reach the public under any circumstances. His expertise in resilience, readiness, and mass communication has led to innovations in protecting critical systems against electromagnetic pulses, setting a national standard. Manny has played a pivotal role in enhancing emergency communication, collaborating with the mass media industry and leading the first Nationwide Emergency Alert System Test in 2011.



### **Marty Bahamonde**

Director, Disaster Operations  
Office of External Affairs, FEMA

Marty Bahamonde serves as the Director of Disaster Operations at FEMA’s Office of External Affairs. He has worked at FEMA in various roles on the regional and national level since 1992. In his role, Mr. Bahamonde leads a team of nearly 600 people who are trained and deployed to support disaster operations across the country. He has led many external affairs operations of national significance, including but not limited to response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Hurricane Sandy in 2012, and Hurricanes Harvey and Maria in 2017. He has responded to numerous hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, tornados, and fires as well as deployed to Bam, Iran in support of the International Medical/Surgical Response Team for a 2003 earthquake.



**Mark Peterson**

Director of External Affairs  
Region 5, FEMA

Mark Peterson serves as the Director of External Affairs for FEMA Region 5. In this role, Mr. Peterson is the senior communications adviser to the regional administrator and Region 5 spokesperson. He is responsible for communications to more than 52 million people across the six Region 5 states (Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan) across various platforms, including hosting, producing, and managing the FEMA podcast.

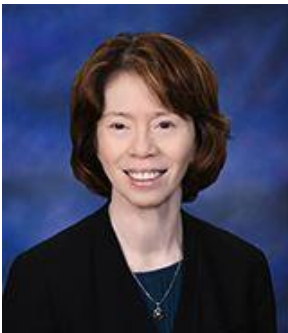


**Chief John A. Donnelly, Sr.**

Fire and Emergency Medical Services  
District of Columbia

John A. Donnelly, Sr. is the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Chief for the District of Columbia, leading the 2,100 member DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department. Chief Donnelly, Sr. started his career with DC Fire and EMS in 1992 at Truck 16. Over the course of his career, Chief Donnelly has served at Rescue Squad 3, Tower 3, and Battalion Fire Chief 2. He was the Division Commander of Special Operations, Homeland Security, and

Apparatus Division and a member of the Command Staff in Special Projects and Executive Officer Roles. In 2018, Chief Donnelly was promoted to the newly established Professional Development Bureau. Chief Donnelly serves on numerous committees supporting regional and national preparedness, including the International Association of Fire Chiefs Terrorism and Homeland Security Committee and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Fire Chief's Committee.



**Mahina Martin**

Director of Public Affairs  
County of Maui, Hawaii

Mahina Martin is the Director of Public Affairs for the County of Maui, leading the Office of Communications and Public Affairs. In this role, she provides support with media relations, public information, and community engagement. As a Director of Government and Community Affairs for Hawaiian Electric, Ms. Martin led the utility's community outreach, corporate giving, and engagement strategy for Maui, Moloka'i, and Lāna'i for over nine years. Ms. Martin previously served as Communications Director during the Tavares administration and as the former Commissioner of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. She is a 2023 USA Board member of the International Association of Public Participation, an international organization advancing the practice of public participation with chapters in 26 countries.



**Yasamie Richardson**

Deputy External Affairs Officer  
National Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) Blue, FEMA

Yasamie Richardson serves as the Deputy External Affairs Officer (EAO) for FEMA's National IMAT Blue. In this role, she served as the EAO during Hurricane Ian in Florida, Hurricane Fiona in Puerto Rico and during that same year she responded to Mississippi in support of the Jackson water crisis. In 2023, she served as the Deputy EAO for the devastating Maui wildfires. Prior to joining IMAT Blue, she was a communications advisor to the FEMA Office of

Response and Recovery. Before coming to FEMA, Ms. Richardson served as the Communications Director for the Governor of Alabama and the Public Information Manager in the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). During her tenure with AEMA, Ms. Richardson was the lead state PIO for the deadly April 2011 tornado outbreak and the response to Deep Water Horizon oil spill in 2010. She is also an AP award winning reporter with extensive experience as a television producer.



**Daniel Watson**

Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs  
Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Daniel Watson serves as the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs for DHS, overseeing the Department’s public outreach, including its media, digital, and strategic and incident communications efforts. In this role, Mr. Watson serves as the principal advisor to Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on all external and internal communications. Mr. Watson rejoined the Department in 2023, with more than 15 years of experience advising policymakers, corporate leaders, and large organizations on a wide range of high-profile and complex issues. He served for five years in senior positions in the Obama-Biden Administration, including as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Prior to Treasury, Mr. Watson was the Associate Director of Public Affairs and Press Secretary for FEMA, serving as the agency’s national spokesperson for more than 200 federally declared disasters, including the response to Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Mr. Watson started his career at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He has also worked on the 2008 Democratic National Convention, the 2008 Obama-Biden presidential campaign, and the office of former U.S. Senator Tom Udall.

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