

Partner Profile - Cascadia Region Earthquake Workgroup
An interview with Pascal Schuback, Executive Director, CREW

FLASH: What is the background and history of the Cascadia Region Earthquake Workgroup?

Pascal: CREW was formed in the late 1990s to help bring together public, private, academic, and nonprofit organizations to address the regional nature of earthquakes and related hazards in the Pacific Northwest. Many agencies and organizations identify, study, monitor, and predict earthquakes and related hazards. CREW strives to bring together researchers, practitioners, and community members as part of the coalition. It works across city, state, federal, and international boundaries to help the entire Cascadia Region plan and become more resilient from earthquakes and related hazards. CREW continues to strengthen the Pacific Northwest by offering workshops and business roundtables, planning guides, public education, and innovative new methods and tools to support the importance of building resiliency.

FLASH: How did you get interested in research, safety, response, recovery, and resilience?

Pascal: My interest started when I was a youngster with the desire to become a firefighter. I remember that day standing beside a Portland Fire Bureau fire engine and staring at it while waiting for my mom. The engine's crew received a call. The lights and siren went on and made me jump. My passion has never stopped. I spent many hours watching the fire bureau training across the street from my father's business. During high school, I participated in the Portland Fire Bureau Explorer Scout Post and staffed a station on many weekends.

My passion continued to grow through college and any course I could take relating to emergency response. Avalanche rescue, swift-water rescue and back-country medicine were a few of my favorites. I started my EMT program, eventually working in an ER/Trauma unit while finishing my degree. 9/11 happened a couple of years later and my focus increased toward understanding all the phases of emergency management.

During my time in the ER, I was able to start using my understanding and skills in technology to help innovate technological tools to support first responders. My two worlds collided and I have been running full speed since. In 2004, I was on a FEMA team supporting the Surge Training Facility for Hurricanes Charlie, Francis, Ivan, and Jeanne. This experience provided more opportunity to integrate my love for emergency management and technology. In 2005, I was back to support Hurricane Katrina. The importance of resiliency started to become more important. When I returned home, I started to work in emergency management full time. I love it more everyday!

FLASH: What do you see to be the future of earthquake science, engineering, research, outreach, response and recovery to increase resiliency? And what do you think is moving the cause of resilience forward?

Pascal: "The future's so bright, I gotta wear shades" is a line from a 1986 song written and recorded by Timbuk 3. Yes, the future in earthquake science, engineering, research, outreach, response, and recovery to increase resiliency is bright.

The advancement of technology in general and how it is used is incredible. Now, let us integrate it into our work. The use of Bots (web robots), UAS (unmanned aircraft system) drones, the advancement of computing power that increases the use of GIS (geographic information system) tools, the analytics of data mining, and ways to reduce processes are some of the big opportunities of the future. I look forward to working on these projects as part of my job and part of my passion.

FLASH: Can you tell us about a specific project your CREW is working on in earthquake safety, science, engineering, research, resilience, and outreach?

Pascal: CREW is just starting a project related to the Earthquake Early Warning (EEW). We are developing a strategy for outreach, education, and training for emergency managers, first responders, and the public. We are identifying protective actions that could be taken if given 10 to 60 seconds of prior notice prior to an earthquake. And looking at how first responders can implement the EEW into their systems and operations. These are just a few of the objectives of this project. This is an important step in the continued development of the EEW. CREW and its partners are excited about this project!

FLASH: Do you have any other comments or words of wisdom for our readers?

Pascal: Be courageous, step out of the bounds of your comfort zone, reach further than you can, and take care of yourself! We work in a profession that can have hidden impacts to our lives. These hidden impacts quietly can grow on us over time. Make sure to take a break, breathe and enjoy the brightness of the future. As my first year as Executive Director of CREW comes to an end, we look forward to the future where opportunities are boundless to reduce the effects of earthquakes.