

A jolt of excitement ran through me as I disembarked my plane at the Baltimore-Washington International Airport. I had arrived for my first FEMA Emergency Management Institute (EMI) Course at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC). It had been a long journey from Troutdale, OR for a weeklong course focused on FEMA's Cooperating Technical Partnership (CTP) program, a program that allows communities and other agencies to partner with FEMA in flood hazard mapping and all-hazards risk reduction campaigns. Troutdale recently joined the CTP ranks, and is one of only a very small number of communities in Oregon to have received this distinction.

The reason for my journey to NETC in northern Maryland was primarily to maximize our utilization of CTP grant funding awarded to Troutdale. In 2018 Troutdale submitted a request for CTP funds in order to allow for enhanced community outreach for our current natural hazard mitigation campaign; an effort launched in response to the 2017 Multnomah County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. This EMI CTP course had been convened by FEMA and its partners to provide in-depth communications training for local, state, and federal partners from across the country.

Over the course of the next four days we engaged with subject matter experts on the use of new data tools, the creation of powerful presentations, and the need for meaningful citizen engagement to create community-wide disaster resilience. As the week came to a close and I began my journey home, I reflected on the shared experience with my classmates and the skills I had gained. I was anxious to get home to put all I had learned into practice, but also eager to return to NETC for future classes. FEMA offers a wide spectrum of training types on a litany of subjects. If you get the chance to make the trip you won't come away disappointed.

Contributed by Ryan Krueger, City of Troutdale