

### Partner Spotlight – Bryan Koon

*Bryan Koon is the former Director at the Florida Division of Emergency Management and serves as IEM's Vice President of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Koon currently serves as the Chair of the Multihazard Mitigation Council (MMC), an independent, non-governmental entity of leading experts in mitigation that helps inform policy and advocates for smart mitigation practices nationwide. Bryan has spent his career focused on improving emergency response operations and engaging communities in becoming better prepared for emergencies and disasters. Bryan currently sits on the Board of Directors for FLASH.*

**Q: What is your background, education, and experience?**

I grew up in North Florida in Suwannee county. I received a bachelor's degree from Cornell University, a master's degree in Business Administration from the George Washington University (GWU), and a Graduate Certificate in Emergency and Crisis Management from GWU.

I served as the Florida Director of Emergency Management from 2011 to 2017. In this role, I also served as Chair of the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) and Vice Chair of the Domestic Security Oversight Council (DSOC).

Prior to working for the state of Florida, I was the Operations Manager and Director of Emergency Management for Walmart, responsible for emergency management operations for 8,500 facilities and 2.2 million employees worldwide during disasters. While on active duty with the Navy, I worked at the White House Military Office in the President's Emergency Operations Center under Presidents Clinton and Bush.

**Q: How did you get interested in emergency management and disaster safety?**

When I was in the White House I was working in the President's Emergency Operation Center and I knew I was getting out of the Navy soon. I was about to go into business school at the time. While I was working at the White House I became more engaged with FEMA and some of the FEMA continuity programs and that's kind of what led to it. So, when the job came up with Walmart I thought "Hey I can combine my MBA with my emergency management experience," and that really was the genesis of it all.

**Q: Can you tell us about specific projects or programs you are working on in the risk reduction or resilience field?**

The [Multihazard Mitigation Council](#) I chair is currently working with the Council on Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (CFIRE) to draft documents describing an innovative resilience mortgage concept that incorporates financing for hazard mitigation into the primary mortgage, and features a positive benefit-cost ratio for both the borrower and lender supported by mortgage, insurance, and tax incentives.

A lot of the work we do at [IEM](#) is on disaster housing using the CDBG funds, so we make sure that whatever we rebuild and repair or replace is designed for the next storm. We also help companies do a lot of mitigation work in a variety of spaces and localities to help them develop their plan, implement their plans, both during blue sky as well as in their disaster recovery efforts. IEM is all emergency managers so everything we do has some bit of risk reduction, resilience, and mitigation built into it. Develop a plan using disaster recovery money, staff their location, whatever it is, we're going to do whatever we can to help them reduce the impact of the next storm.

**Q: Do you see an increased interest in resilient building after the 2017 season?**

What I'm seeing are the action plans that have come out of Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico, specifically. They make it very clear that they don't want to go through that again. Puerto Rico especially. They have made it quite clear that they want to incorporate every new advancement they can in building technology and designing their systems.

Now, the challenge is to take that "aspiration" and turn it into "perspiration" and make it happen. That's the challenging part because these programs last for years and years and as we know, the further you get away from the storm and as economic realities set in and politics step in, sometimes the interest declines. I've seen customers, homeowners, and families show a greater desire rebuild resiliently. My hope is that it will continue forward.

**Q: What do you see in the future of resilient building?**

Well I think it's going to be evolutionary based on events. And the events will be disasters. There will be policy or legislative changes that require people to pay attention. Hopefully builders, developers, and realtors take what they initially may not be in favor of and turn it into an advantage by differentiating their product into a safer product resulting in stronger communities.

Also, there will be steps that come along as advances in technology progress. As the technology becomes cheaper people will start incorporating them into their building plans. And then hopefully, we will see an upward trend in terms of customer demand for these safety features much like the demand for safety features in the automobile industry.

**Q: Do you have any other comments to offer our readers?**

It feels sometimes that progress is so slow. Maddeningly slow. There are times when it seems like we're pushing a rock up a hill but eventually it will pay off. We know that the efforts we put in place save lives and protect property. It also saves dollars, is good for the economy, but most importantly it saves lives. And so, it's a good fight to fight, and I encourage everybody to do as much as they can to get the information out there for the public to hear because eventually we will get to that tipping point. We aren't there yet but we're getting closer.