

As we graduate from this prestigious institution, from the program called the Emergency Managers Advanced Academy, we are challenged one and all to carry forth the time honored tradition of Public Service in our respective communities and in doing so, make an impact. Our individual and collective efforts contains the very best of our personal characteristics. We are as bold as a cup of Northwestern black coffee, as kind and gentle as Southern hospitality, as refreshing as a Midwestern wind, as big and boisterous as the great State of Texas, as colorful as the fall season in New England, and as strong and resilient as a New Yorker's spirit.

We place the needs of others before our own because we have answered the call to service. In times of calm, we plan. Where there is a quest for knowledge, we teach. In times of disaster, we respond. In times of recovery, we console and strive to make whole those who have suffered unimaginable loss, of which only those in our career field can relate and truly understand. In times of chaos, we calm and in times of division, we unite.

As the generations before us have paved the way for us to assume the heady responsibilities of caring for others, so must we mentor and develop those who will come after us and who share the same selfless drive and desire to serve others in their time of need. The debt we owe, to those who have educated, mentored, and befriended us, can only be repaid by following in their footsteps and carrying on the noble traditions taught to us by our instructors and championed by this institution. Our Cohort cherishes and values the opportunity to attend this prestigious program and we will carry the lessons learned with us throughout the duration of our careers and beyond.

Together, our Cohort have suffered frustrations, we've experienced enlightenment, we've challenged preconceived notions, we've pushed the boundaries of our profession, and most importantly, we've bonded together as family. Emergency Managers all, from the four corners of this great nation, bound together by duty, honor, mutual respect, and dedication to the safety and security of others, have formed into a cadre of Professionals, forever unified by a mutual love and respect for one another, ready and able to accept any challenge and meet any objective.

In the words of Robert F. Kennedy, "Few will have the greatness to bend history itself but each of us can work to change a small portion of events and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation."

Let us never forget the advancements we've made, the commitments we've pledged to our communities, and the love and respect we've developed for one another. We are family, joined together by the bonds we've forged both in and outside the learning environment. As we recognize the need others have for us in times of crisis, may we never forget the need we have for one another.

We are one, forever bound by our experiences.

Thank you.