

We are excited to bring this editorial for the first issue of Volume 12 in 2023. In this issue, the *International Journal of Emergency Services (IJES)* is publishing nine original articles that explore a range of subjects relevant to the three main emergency services (ambulance, police and fire). It includes important themes such as executive leadership and continuous improvement (CI), mental health and stress patterns, opioid use and burnout, part-time firefighters (PTFs), intrinsic motivation, rapid intervention vehicles (RIVs), moral sensemaking, social media use in emergency planning and response, COVID-19 impact on emergency medical services (EMS) frontline responders; fatigue and shift pattern in the police recruits and multi-agency collaboration in dealing with pandemic. These papers seek to close the information gap by making significant contributions to the emergency management literature and the way we view the role of emergency management practitioners.

The first article entitled “Visions of improvement: a thematic analysis of executive leadership,” co-authored by Bryan Rodgers and Jiju Anthony, explores the themes and gaps around the embedding of CI methodologies within public sector organisations, especially in the emergency services. Using qualitative interview data from three case studies namely the ambulance, police and fire and rescue services in Scotland, the study highlights the need for more holistic and organisation-wide approaches to CIs including explicit commitment to CI through executive leaders, a need for a broader organisational culture of trust and empowerment and reforming public sector budgeting in order to sustain CI. The study explores and analyses the existing understanding and commitment of executive leaders in emergency services.

Emelie Lantz, Bengt Nilsson, Carina Elmqvist, Bengt Fridlund and Anders Svensson, in their article entitled “Serving the community while balancing multiple responsibilities – experiences of working as a paid part-time firefighter” explore and document the experiences of working as a paid PTF in Swedish rural areas. The findings from their study give us insights into how firefighters share a strong commitment, how support plays a crucial role and how training and call-outs contribute to their experiences (often nuanced), ranging from personal limitations and challenges to satisfaction and the contrast with ordinary life. The study addresses the knowledge gap about the role of PTF which is still under-represented in the literature, despite the reliance on them in many countries.

Our third article, is entitled “Rapid intervention vehicles’ impact on fire departments’ response time” and is co-authored by Maria Køber Guldvik, Anders Helseth and Gjermund Grimsby. It estimates the effect of RIVs’ impact on fire department’s response time based upon analysis on the database of all emergency fire responses in Norway from 2016 to 2021. The study found that the introduction of RIVs into the fire department’s task force reduced response times by 53 s on average for every call where an RIV is being deployed, given an average driving length of an emergency call of 6.4 kilometres. The response time is reduced to approximately 37 s independently of driving length, and this effect increases with 2.5 s per km. The analysis shows that RIVs have a positive impact on response time in both urban and rural areas, while particularly strong for urban areas. This has implications for other fire departments and in particular for those which are operating in urban areas.

In our next article, entitled “Use of social media for information seeking and sharing during floods in rural Sarawak”, Ching Seng Yap, William Keling and Shamsul Kamariah Abdullah examine the information acquired and shared by floods victims in Sarawak, Malaysia, and the individuals’ perception of social media information quality and awareness of social media platforms. The research data were gathered from victims in two flood-ravaged villages with a researcher-administered pre-validated questionnaire survey



instrument. Social media utilisation during floods in rural Malaysia remained low compared to traditional counterparts, such as television and radio. The most highly sought and exchanged information involved eyewitness pictures or videos, road or traffic conditions and weather conditions or warnings. The study found that Facebook was the most extensively employed digital platform. Notably, over half of the respondents were unaware of the two social media applications namely “Twitter Alerts” and “Facebook Safety Check”. Important public policy implications follow to assess the current national disaster management policy effectiveness, and could develop such digital content to attract victims’ attention and elevate disaster event awareness.

Ole Ragnar Norheim Jenssen and Thomas Dillern in their article entitled, “Motivational regulation and physical activity in future emergency responders—staying fit, healthy and safe in a demanding occupational context”, highlight the ever important balance between physical intensity of emergency work and staying fit, healthy and reducing stress, applying motivational theory. Close to 260 students at Norwegian Police University College (NPUC) took part in a cross-section survey design method. The data were sampled through a twofold questionnaire where one part measured motivation towards physical activity, and one part measured physical activity level. The study reveals the value of the self-determination theory (SDT) in understanding exercise behaviour and physical activity adherence amongst emergency responders, and moreover, the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation, in the educational institutions, to increase physical activity and physical activity adherence throughout their career. These findings have implications for new recruits joining other emergency services such as ambulance and fire departments, highlighting the importance of motivational regulation related to physical activity patterns.

Our sixth article, co-authored by Jori Pascal Kalkman and Eric-Hans Kramer, is entitled “Emergency responders’ moral sensemaking: the influence of compartmentalization” which explores the fascinating subject of the effects of compartmentalization on responders’ moral sensemaking, an under-researched topic. While emergency service organisations often allocate specific tasks to responders in an attempt to resolve increasingly complex incidents, the effects of emergency organising on emergency responders’ moral sensemaking, referring to their sensemaking on moral issues during the emergency operation, has received little attention in the literature. The study demonstrates that emergency organisations may undermine the moral sensemaking of responders through introducing moral blind spots and moral dissociation or, instead, enable moral sensemaking through enhancing moral agency and awareness. The authors argue that emergency organisations need to induce moral sense-discrediting amongst responders to enhance their moral sensemaking. The study argues that compartmentalization on the basis of functional deconcentration (i.e. holographic metaphor) may best enhance a sense of moral agency and awareness in emergency responders.

In our next article, entitled, “How did fire and rescue services (and HMICFRS) in England respond to the COVID-19 pandemic?”, Peter Murphy and Katarzyna Lakoma explore how fire and rescue services in England responded to the challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on secondary data, it examines the form and nature of fire and rescue services’ collaborations with the ambulance, police and other services and how effective their emergency planning arrangements prepared them for the pandemic. The study presents an important opportunity for seeking to understand what is working well and where improvements are required to improve both the local and national response in relation to such a complex and dynamic environment presented by COVID-19.

In our penultimate article entitled, “Emergency medical services on the frontlines of the opioid overdose crisis: the role of mental health, substance use, and burnout”, Corinne A. Beaugard, Valerie Hruschak, Christina S. Lee, Jenifer Swab, Sheila Roth and Daniel Rosen investigate whether variables related to the opioid crisis were associated with burnout of emergency medical services (EMS) workers and to explore the relationship between mental

health and sleep patterns. In a cross-sectional web-based study, surveys were distributed to over 200 EMS workers in Pennsylvania, USA in the winter of 2018. Participants completed measures on burnout, social support, mental health, substance use and sleep quality and reported their frequency of naloxone administration and their attitudes about working during the opioid overdose crisis. The regression analysis revealed that depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sleep, attitudes about working during the opioid crisis, cannabis use, social support, age, hours worked each week and frequency of naloxone administration were significantly correlated with burnout. Considering the increased stressors related the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic and the crisis of opioid overdoses, the study has wider implications in planning interventions and training to prevent EMS burnout to improve attitudes about supporting individuals during overdose events.

Our final article, entitled “Voices from the frontline: a review of EMS first responders’ experience of COVID-19 in Ireland is co-authored by Gavin David Brown, Ann Largey, Caroline McMullan, Grainne O’Shea and Niamh Reilly and explores the experiences of Irish emergency medical services (EMS) first responders during the first nationwide restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19. A systematic literature review search into healthcare workers’ and first responders’ experiences during the COVID-19 and 2003 SARS pandemics informed the content of an online questionnaire distributed via the Irish Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council to over 2000 first responders on its live register. The study highlighted a range of challenges faced by EMS first responders including PPE quality, training on its use, issues with decontamination facilities and organisational effectiveness. Emotional challenges included the anxiety experienced, the impact on families and ethical dilemmas confronted related to patient care. Positive findings also emerged, such as first responders’ dedication to working through the pandemic, collegiality and the community goodwill displayed. This study provides an insight into the challenges and successes experienced by first responders and identifying opportunities for learning that can be applied to future public health emergencies.

As we highlighted in our editorial for Volume 11.2, *IJES* is now included in the Academic Journal Guide 2021 published by the Chartered Association of Business School (CABS) as a “two star” journal. *IJES* is now also included in the Journal Quality list published by the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) as a “C” rated journal. These are significant recognition for a relatively new journal such as ours and we are immensely grateful to our authors, reviewers, readers and to also to our publishers Emerald in supporting our mission to be a leading journal in the field of emergency services management and in making *IJES* a leading voice in the discipline. Our grateful thanks to scholars who cite the research published in *IJES* thereby improving the journal cite score. We always value the comments and feedback from our readers and invite suggestions for future themes, topics and expressions of interest for special issues.

In 2023, *IJES* has been represented at major international conferences by sponsoring/hosting specialist panels/presenting papers on emergency services management by the editors and editorial team. This includes the Annual International Research Society for Public Management (IRSPM) conference held in Budapest, Hungary in April 2023 and the British Academy of Management (BAM) conference being organised by the University of Sussex, UK in September 2023.

We again renew our call for publishing with us or joining *IJES* as potential reviewers and/or on the editorial board.

Paresh Wankhade