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**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FIELD: A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH CURTIS BROWN, STATE COORDINATOR FOR VIRGINIA'S DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

*#PrepTalkNYC* {Click to listen to [episode 60](#)}

**January 6, 2021** — As the world turns the page to a year filled with new beginnings, an age-old concept should continue to ruminate at the forefront of every emergency manager's mind: the need for more diversity in the field. That is the message Curtis Brown, state coordinator for Virginia's Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), shares on the latest episode of "Prep Talk." In a candid discussion, Brown underscores the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in emergency management, noting that these concepts will help reverse inequitable practices that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations that often endure the worst of major emergencies and disasters. Moreover, Brown says emergency managers should integrate individuals from minority groups into every component of the emergency management process – from preparedness and outreach to response and recovery – to reverse systemic racism and structural biases that have plagued these communities throughout the years. He adds that emergency management could mimic the private sector's model for representation, as studies have revealed the positive results diversity yields on decision making and tackling complex challenges.

"I think the same would be true in emergency management with more diversity, where we are talking about disproportionate impacts specifically to marginalized communities and communities of color, by having individuals who come from those communities to provide the perspective on how to best engage and how to best empower their communities," **Brown** said. "I believe that if we want to rise to the challenge of these complex disasters that we're dealing with now, it would be beneficial in serving our mission – to mitigate the loss of life and to enhance our preparedness – by bringing these diverse voices and perspectives to the table."

During the episode, Brown outlines concrete procedures emergency managers can implement to ensure work environments are inclusive and sensitive when addressing social issues in the workplace, and reveals his hope for the emergency management field during the next few years. He believes we can take the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to guide the future of the field, leveraging diversity, equity, and inclusion as assets as we deal with future disasters. You can listen to the latest episode on [SoundCloud](#), [iTunes](#), and [Spreaker](#).

### **Profile**

**Curtis Brown** most recently served as the chief deputy state coordinator at the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. He has homeland security and emergency management policy experience at the federal, state, and local levels. Previously, Brown served as regional emergency management administrator for the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, professional staff on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, and senior special assistant to the governor in the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness. Brown is also the co-founder of the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management, a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing diversity and inclusion in the field, promoting the elimination of systemic biases, and integrating the application of equitable practices to improve disaster outcomes for vulnerable communities.



Brown received a bachelor's degree in political science from Radford University, a master's degree in public administration from Virginia Tech, and a master's degree in homeland security and emergency preparedness from Virginia Commonwealth University. He is a graduate of the Virginia Executive Institute, Commonwealth Management Institute, and FEMA's Emergency Management Executive Academy.

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