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Office of Emergency Management Public Information Officer Earns Top Certification

SPRINGFIELD, MO — Erin Hedlun, Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management public information officer, has recently joined an elite group of professionals from around the country in certification as a Master Public Information Officer.

The MPIO program is the highest level of public information-focused training available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA.

Larry Woods, director of the Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management, or OEM, said Hedlun's dedication to achieve the designation is a great benefit to the organization.

“Erin is a valuable member of our team. She is a consummate professional who is dedicated to serving the public’s needs,” he said. “Having a member of our team attain this certification further solidifies our resolve to provide the highest caliber of communication to our community during a crisis.”

Hedlun, hired in 2014, was among 24 who completed the first-ever, year-long iteration of the new version of the program at the FEMA Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

She studied topics such as PIO leadership principles, disaster behavioral health, the influence of the PIO in organizational development and how to leverage a whole community approach to public information.

In addition, Hedlun completed a public information-focused capstone paper to be published through FEMA and successfully passed a comprehensive strategy and skills testing process in order to receive certification.

“Communication plays a critical role not only in effective disaster response but in the daily focus of preparedness as well,” Hedlun said. “It was an honor to be counted among the diverse group of communication professionals who received this certification, and I hope the skills I’ve developed through this process will ultimately assist in providing timely and life-saving information to citizens when it’s needed most.”

To qualify for the intense training, Hedlun was selected out of more than 60 hopefuls through an application process based on merit and strict criteria, including a “demonstrated sphere of influence capable of advancing the relevance of whole community external affairs/public information.”

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