

# Mobilizing Scouts for Disaster Response

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Darrell Donahue, a professor of chemical and biological engineering at the University of Maine, brought significant experience in risk assessment to his assignment at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the Office of Health Affairs (OHA). He had worked previously on projects supported by government agencies and the private sector, contributing his expertise in statistics and simulation modeling to assess exposure and dose-response to establish scientific criteria for safe food and drinking water. So it came as a surprise to find a connection in his fellowship to his youth as an Eagle Scout and his activities as a Boy Scout leader.

Darrell was assigned to support the Division Director of Threat Characterization and Countermeasures within OHA. One project involved exploring strategies to support local disaster preparedness initiatives. It turned out that several of Darrell's colleagues in the effort were active with the Boy Scouts as well. They challenged him to find mechanisms to connect scouting with community preparedness. When Darrell contacted the National Boy Scout Council, he learned that they were in the process of reviewing the emergency preparedness merit badge that is required to attain Eagle Scout status.

As a result of those serendipitous connections, changes and revisions crafted by Darrell and others in DHS will be included in the new merit badge guidelines. "The goal is to have the Boy

Scouts be among the organizations that can mobilize communities in their planning for community preparedness and response to disasters," he said.

The scout motto "be prepared," served Darrell well in other DHS assignments, including developing an assessment and planning tool for state and local governments to use when responding to a major food emergency. "The summer 2008 tomato scare involving salmonella is one example of such an event," Darrell explained.

He returned to Maine upon the conclusion of his fellowship, where, in addition to continuing research on risk assessment and modeling, he teaches courses on process engineering and statistical process control and analysis.

Learning how the government functions and what it's like to work in the federal system "challenged me in a way that research doesn't," Darrell explained.

He expects the experience will cause him to be "a little more politically active and lead by example." Surely the Boy Scouts would approve.

