

Emergency Planning

UIC receives \$1.5 Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant

by David Ibrahim, Ph.D., Director of Curriculum, U of I at Chicago School of Public Health

The University of Illinois at Chicago has been selected to develop and execute a strategy for integrating the private sector with the emergency management community during a regional catastrophic event.

The City of Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC) chose UIC through a project funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program.

"We look forward to working with the teams associated with these world-class institutions to increase preparedness on behalf of the millions of people living in the region," said Gary W. Schenkel, OEMC Executive Director.

The project will focus on the Illinois-Indiana-Wisconsin Combined Statistical Area, consisting of 10 Illinois counties, Chicago, five Indiana counties and one Wisconsin county in conjunction with local, State, and Federal established practices and procedures.

"We need to address the specific critical infrastructure sectors that have been prioritized based on the first 72-96 hours of a catastrophe, and identify a common understanding of the combined statistical area's operational requirements and gaps related to communications and resource inventory systems," said David Ibrahim, principal investigator of the project and adjunct assistant professor of environmental and occupational health sciences at the UIC School of Public Health.

The UIC project will involve completing a regional needs assessment that includes an inventory of government, private sector, and other essential communication systems; development of a region-wide private sector communications plan; establishment of an automated emergency response network to alert the private sector to major emergency situations; creation of a template to inventory available critical resources in the private sector that may be needed to support government operations during a major disaster; and development of software specifications for the resource inventory database system.

The project will rely on voluntary participation from private sector partners and will assess utilities, communications, public health and health care, banking, drinking water and water treatment, and mass transit.

"We want to maximize the knowledge and expertise of the region's top 500 companies" in the preparedness planning efforts, said Ibrahim.

Faculty from UIC's School of Public Health, College of Business Administration, and Emergency Management and Continuity Planning Certificate Program are co-collaborators on the project.

Other partners include OEMC, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, Cook County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and 10 regional catastrophic planning team subcommittees.

For more information about UIC's Emergency Management and Continuity Planning program, visit www.uic.edu/depts/oeem/emergencymanagement. For more information about UIC, visit www.uic.edu.