While this focus is critical, I want to touch on two other essential aspects of municipal emergency management: succession planning and community engagement.

First, as an organization, are you prepared for staff leadership transitions? During my tenure on Pullman’s city council, I have experienced the retirement of our city supervisor, fire chief, police chief, transit manager, and airport executive director. Our city’s advance preparation for these successions prevented an emergency situation and provided opportunity for growth and innovation.

With Mike McCarty’s December retirement, it is good to know that Mike built a strong leadership team and that AWC staff has excelled during this transition. We have started the CEO search process, but we don’t have to rush to fill the position; we will take our time to select the best CEO. If you know someone who you feel should be the next AWC CEO, I ask you to encourage them to apply.

Second, are you prepared to engage your community as partners in emergency management? I became vividly aware of this factor last June after the campus shooting at Seattle Pacific University. My daughter is a student at SPU, and even though Pullman is almost 300 miles away I made sure that I was on campus before the day ended and had Gailynn embraced in my arms.

Local emergency services had the situation well in hand, so I looked for a way to restore some normalcy to the day. We ended up at Molly Moon’s for ice cream, and even though it was past their normal business hours they had a line out the door. When I asked the server why they stayed open, her response was, “The community needs us to be open—how could we think about closing?”

As you read this edition of Cityvision, I hope you think about how to engage your entire community in emergency management so we can continue to have strong communities in this great state.

Francis Benjamin
Pullman Councilmember