

SPHTM grad Emma Hunter blazes a trail in California Homeland Security

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Despite living in the San Francisco area and holding a demanding position there as regional coordinator for the Association of Bay Area Health Officials (ABAHO), Emma Hunter (BSPH '16, MPH DM '17) still makes the time to give back to her school by engaging regularly with current students.

Much of her involvement comes in the form of seminars and guest lectures, where Hunter can provide real-world experience and perspectives to students looking to build their own careers in disaster management.

"Guest speaking is always so fun! As a disaster management student, hearing from recent graduates working in the field was one of my favorite parts of the program. It

allowed me to gain a better understanding of where my degree could take me and helped foster professional connections,” Hunter said. “I’m glad to provide the same to current students and it’s nice to serve as a resource to others looking to get into the field.”

In addition to providing a flesh-and-blood example of what a disaster management career trajectory can look like, Hunter has also provided some of the important tactical lessons that can be learned about public health preparedness strategy in a large metropolitan area.

In her current job, Hunter coordinates regional emergency response activities throughout the San Francisco Bay area. That includes supporting 13 health officers, public health preparedness managers, medical countermeasures coordinators, public information officers, and hospital preparedness coordinators.

Hunter is the facilitator for the Region II Public Health Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group and sits on the Bay Area BioWatch Advisory Committee where she brings a comprehensive lens to her collaborative, regional work.

Her experience and track record in this arena have now been recognized multiple times, including the 2018 Bill Singer Award, recognizing notable effort in emergency preparedness during a manager’s first year of service. That award highlighted her development of a health alert network which allows San Mateo County Health to reach over 6,000 healthcare providers and response partners.

Hunter will be honored again on December 2 at the 2022 California Women in Homeland Security Annual Awards Ceremony, where she will be presented the 2022 Trailblazer Award.

The Trailblazer Award honors individuals in the state who have less than ten years of experience in the field, yet have stood out with exceptional performance and forward-thinking innovation while exuding enthusiasm and dedication.

“It’s such an honor to be recognized by my peers in California Women in Homeland Security with the Trailblazer Award! There are so many women in this organization whose careers I admire and for my work to be highlighted in this way is validating that I’m on the right track,” Hunter said.

“Public health emergency preparedness and response can feel like a thankless job, especially almost three years into a pandemic, so for a homeland security group to honor this aspect of emergency management is incredible. I am lucky to have strong female mentorship and am thankful to be part of an organization that helps foster women in this field; my hope is to continue to build community amongst young women in homeland security.”

Hunter’s ability to excel and earn accolades has not gone unnoticed, particularly at the place where her career track truly came into focus.

“Emma is truly an ambassador for the school, the Department of Environmental Health Sciences, and the Disaster Management Program,” said Stephen Murphy, assistant professor in Environmental Health Sciences. “She has swiftly established herself as a leader in the field of public health emergency preparedness and graciously contributes her knowledge and career path back to current students through seminars and guest lectures. We are thrilled to see her work be honored and celebrated - it is so well-deserved. We could not be any prouder of her.”

Those interested in watching the upcoming awards ceremony can [register via Eventbrite](#).