Schoharie Deaths Could Take Traumatic Toll For Family, Responders

By BRIAN SHIELDS • OCT 13, 2018

Firefighters hold each other during a vigil in Schoharie

LUCAS WILLARD / WAMC
It has been one week since the limousine crash in Schoharie County that killed 20 people, shattering the quiet peace of a small community and forever changing the lives of the friends and families of those who died and the first responders who were called out to the horrific scene. As the funerals are under way, and the investigations continue, WAMC's Brian Shields spoke with an expert in grief counseling and disaster mental health about the human toll of the event.

Dr. Karla Vermeulen is an associate professor in the psychology department at SUNY New Paltz and deputy director of the Institute For Disaster Mental Health. She is also the director of the advanced certificate program in trauma and disaster mental health at the school. She says the first responders in Schoharie County, many of whom are volunteers, may not be ready to handle the trauma of the accident, as opposed to state police and responders in larger urban areas who face trauma and multiple fatalities more often.

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