APUS Sweeps IAEM-USA Student Council Awards!

By Dawn Heyse
IAEM-USA at APUS Treasurer

In early February, the IAEM Student Council Awards Committee announced that, for the second year running, the AMU/APU Chapter of IAEM has been awarded Chapter of the Year! This award recognizes a Chapter who has made significant contributions in promoting IAEM and the Student Council.

It was also announced that our Chapter’s nominees for Advisor of the Year, Dr. Christopher Reynolds, and the Ally Award, the APUS chapter of Epsilon Pi Phi, won in those categories.

Congratulations and good work to all!

Russell Joins as Chapter Advisor

By Hannah Vick
IAEM-USA at APUS President

I am pleased to introduce Professor Elizabeth Russell, our new faculty advisor for the AMU/APU IAEM Student Chapter! We’re looking forward to working with Elizabeth and relying on her guidance as we move forward helping our members academically and professionally.

Prof. Russell is an Adjunct Instructor of emergency planning and hazard mitigation for APUS. She possesses a Master's degree in Emergency Management and Disaster Preparedness as well as a Bachelor's Degree in International Studies, both from Elmira College. Aside from work with APUS, Elizabeth has experience in emergency planning for the non-profit sector, particularly for organizations working with children and special populations. She has also worked as a Program Assistant with WorldTeach, Inc. out of Harvard University and as a research assistant at Elmira College.

Prof. Russell spent much of her college career engaged in clubs and activities and is now an active member of her community. Formerly a delegate for Elmira College’s Model UN, she is currently a member of IAEM and the Arts Center/Old Forge, and acts as a volunteer for MAC’s SafeRide. Her current area of residence is the Adirondack Mountains in New York State, where she enjoys a multitude of activities, including canoeing and snowshoeing. In joining APUS’ IAEM Student Chapter as the advisor, Elizabeth hopes to actively engage with the student population and is eager to ensure that the organization experiences the same level of activity that she was afforded in her years as a student.

Please join me in welcoming Elizabeth to our organization! We’re appreciative of the continued commitment and support from the University.
Message from the President

By Hannah Vick
IAEM-USA at APUS President

Welcome to a new year! Our chapter of IAEM is looking toward this Spring as a time to build on the progress we’ve made and find new ways to help our members grow professionally and academically. But, we need your help!

The expertise and experience in our membership is phenomenal! Our members represent a wide range of skills across a broad spectrum of professions. This knowledge serves our members, the University and the disaster management community as a whole. But we need for more of our members to step up and offer their talents for our chapter. There are many ways to get involved:

- General membership meetings are held every third Saturday of each month at 12:00 noon Eastern by teleconference. Join the conversation and hop on the call!
- Contribute to this newsletter, The Guardian. Did you know that contributions to the newsletter can be counted toward your CEM/AEM credentialing application? Share an assignment paper, a book review or something emergency management-related that’s on your mind!
- Get involved with your community! Volunteer for our community service project with the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America. Members volunteer their time to help local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts earn an emergency preparedness badge, pin or patch. More than 25 AMU/APU IAEM student chapter members have volunteered and we expect even more as this project continues through the Spring.
- Consider running for office. The next elections for our chapter leadership team will be held in May. What better time to start planning than now?
- Help us with our OrgSync website! No computer programming experience needed, just an eye for detail and a little extra time to assist with cleaning things up.
- Suggest your great ideas! We’re all ears to anyone who wants to help out, make a contribution and get involved. If you have a special talent or a passion for something, let us know!

Get involved and join us! Anyone interested in offering their time and talents is encouraged to e-mail me at Hannah.M.Vick@gmail.com.

Regards,
Hannah Vick
President, AMU/APU IAEM Student Chapter

http://cemr-network.org/
IAEM 2011 Scholarship Applications

Extract from an email from Nancy Harris
IAEM Student Region President

The IAEM Scholarship Commission is now accepting applications for the 2011 scholarship program! The application may be downloaded from the link below:


Please read it thoroughly! If you have any questions, please email Matthew Feryan at jmferyan@hotmail.com.

Completed applications should be mailed to IAEM Headquarters at the address below, no later than May 13, 2011.

Mail completed applications to: IAEM Scholarship Commission
ATTN: Dawn M. Shiley-Danzeisen
201 Park Washington Court
Falls Church, VA 22046-4527

Good luck to all applicants!

Crisis Management and the 21st Century Military

By John A. Oldham
MA EDM Student
This paper was originally written and submitted for EDMG604 in August 2010

In today’s world, organizations have invested large amounts of time and energy on how to better compete and produce cheaper products; however, some organizational leaders continue to fail in managing a crisis. In the past year, the United States has experienced numerous cases wherein organizations have failed to forecast, plan for, and train for pending crises. Economic researchers would like to believe many of the problems that society now faces are due to poor business decisions and a lack of communication between those in charge and those in need. Organizational crisis management by definition “is made up from multiple disciplines thereby requiring researchers to use a systematic approach in defining how a crisis would impact an organization and those in which it serves” (Clair & Pearson, 1998).

Completing coursework in organizational crisis management has opened my eyes to a new level of understanding and awareness. There is no organization today free of problems or crises; what has defined the success of industry leaders is their ability to overcome crises and retain the faith of those whom they serve. In turn, this course has taught me many valuable lessons, the most important centering on internal and external channels of communication.

For any organization to overcome the problems associated with a crisis, they must be willing to accept criticism, remain truthful, and openly communicate with employees and customers alike. In recent years and with an increase in competition organizations have been required to improve the way in which they communicate with key stakeholders. While this class has stressed the importance of planning and training of personnel for times of crisis, it has provided insight into the flow of organizational communication.

Many companies within the United States and throughout the world are structured to pass information from the top down. However, research has shown that companies suffer long-term effects in a crisis when they neglect to accept feedback from the bottom up. To guarantee the long term success of any organization, its leadership must be willing to consider and accept the input provided by those who conduct daily operations. It has been said that Rome was not built in a night; however, any empire can fall at the hands of arrogant leadership.

While evidence shows that the military strives to run itself more like a corporation, it, too, lacks the willingness to accept input from the lowest of its levels. Many of my peers are trained to follow orders and not question the legitimacy or direction of those above them. Until military leaders are willing to accept input and free thought from the most junior Airman, Soldier, Sailor or Marine, traditions will hold stronger than efficiency.

References

Take off Your T-Shirt: A Case Study in FEMA Media Relations

By Hannah M. Vick
MA EDM Student
This paper was originally written and submitted for EDMG560 in May 2010

Introduction

On Saturday, May 15, 2010, a videographer from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was in a small Mississippi community shooting footage of volunteers cleaning up debris left by devastating spring tornadoes. The volunteers were part of a community-wide effort, called the “Caring for Mississippi – Community Work Day” and wore brightly colored t-shirts sporting logos of the Salvation Army, the “Caring for Mississippi” organization and the local television station. Before conducting an on-camera interview, the FEMA videographer reportedly asked the volunteers “to change [their] shirt because we don’t want anything faith-based” (Wagster-Pettus, 2010). The volunteers changed their t-shirts and participated in the interview, but then contacted Congressman Gregg Harper and the media. The volunteers – who attend the same church as the Congressman – were understandably upset that a FEMA employee presumably did not want faith-based logos as a part of a FEMA-created video. Both the Congressman and the media – especially the sponsoring TV station – were outraged that FEMA deliberately excluded a volunteer-based initiative based on religious ties. The story was soon picked up by the national media and the Fox News morning show, Fox & Friends, opened their May 19 program with the dramatic teaser, “FEMA versus Faith in Mississippi” (Harper, 2010).

Although this event was not a large-scale crisis, the actions of a lone videographer created a public relations flap that had to be handled at the highest levels. FEMA has struggled to rebuild its beleaguered reputation since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and its response to this incident demonstrated several solid media relations strategies. Weathering negative media attention is difficult, but the right actions can mitigate a damaging story. In this case, FEMA needed to rely on these crisis management principles: 1.) A strong and immediate response, 2.) A unified and constant response, and 3.) An appropriate and contextual response. By analyzing FEMA’s use of these principles, we can gain a better understanding of how an organization can respond and manage a public relations crisis.

A Strong and Immediate Response

FEMA’s response to this incident was strong and immediate. As soon as the media and Congressman Harper began asking questions of the FEMA External Affairs department, the matter was identified as a “hot button” issue and sent up the chain for senior-level handling. On May 18, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate issued a statement to the media saying,

“The photographer in question was absolutely wrong and their actions in no way reflect FEMA’s policies or priorities. We are proud of the work that is done by our volunteer and faith-based partners, and we are proud to work side-by-side with them in disaster recovery efforts across the country. FEMA is not the team, FEMA is only part of the team, and critical members of that team are the voluntary and faith-based organizations we work with every day” (Harper, 2010).

The night before, Administrator Fugate called Congressman Harper personally to apologize and formal apologies were provided to the Salvation Army and the “Mississippi Cares” organization (Wagster-Pettus, 2010). Because of these actions, most of the media attention was placed on FEMA’s apology instead of the incident itself. While not ideal, having the media talk about how sorry the organization sounds is better than a story focused solely on the organization’s ineptitude.

The immediate response and strongly-worded apology demonstrate that FEMA was attempting – with moderate success – to “control the message.” In Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable, Steven Fink says that during a crisis, our goal should be to “control and manage the message…you want to issue the statement your way, in a way that will tell the truth and make your company look best” (Fink, 2000, p. 98). Since Administrator Fugate had already issued a statement and spoken personally with Congressman Harper, the Fox News story included FEMA’s “side of the story.” Fox News posted the Administrator’s statement during their newscast and Congressman Harper acknowledged FEMA’s quick actions to respond to the crisis (Harper, 2010). Had FEMA responded slowly or less robustly, the media coverage could have included more incendiary remarks and may have escalated further.

A Unified and Constant Response

Almost every publication about crisis management and crisis communication emphasize the importance of speaking with a “unified voice” (Barrett, 2005). In the Harvard Business Review article Media Policy – What Media Policy?, Pepsi-Cola Public Affairs Manager Anne Reynolds says that the success of media relations depends on the establishment of “a clear communications policy that defines who speaks to the press on the company’s behalf” (Sonnenfeld, 2002, p. 137).
If there is more than one designated spokesperson identified in the communication plan, all must speak with one voice and reiterate one message (Barrett, 2005).

FEMA used two spokesmen during this crisis: FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate and Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) Mike Bolch, the most senior federal official handling the Mississippi tornado disaster recovery operation. FCO Bolch participated in a lengthy television interview with the local TV station (Adams, 2010) and as noted above, Administrator Fugate issued a prepared statement. Both officials adhered to the same message that FEMA apologizes, that the videographer’s actions do not represent the agency and that FEMA is proud to work with faith-based organizations. No one else in FEMA was authorized to comment about this story; Public Information Officers in the field were advised that all questions about this issue must be referred to FEMA Headquarters.

The “speaking with one voice” strategy is generally sound, but in some cases, the media can get the impression an organization is stonewalling or hiding information (Clark et al., 2006). For example, the Associated Press reported this crisis accurately – with FEMA’s apology – but at the end of the article stated that, “[Rep.] Harper said Fugate told him the photographer had been fired. A FEMA spokesman would not comment” (Wagster-Pettus, 2010). Even though no one at FEMA External Affairs said the words, “no comment,” the reporter was dissatisfied that neither Fugate or Bolch responded to questions about the termination of the videographer. FEMA determined that the employment status of the videographer was not a part of the “unified message,” so FEMA did not respond. In this particular case, FEMA’s non-response was probably not harmful to the overall message, but in future crises, not answering easily-anticipated questions could prolong the negative media coverage. Speaking with a unified voice is central to “controlling the message,” but it must be done in a responsive, open manner to be effective (Fink, 2000, p.98).

An Appropriate and Contextual Response

There were several options FEMA could have chosen when deciding how to respond to this crisis. FEMA could have held a news conference, publicly fired FCO Mike Bolch, or sent a senior official to Mississippi to “handle” the situation. FEMA could have not responded at all, or could have only allowed its employees to talk “off the record.” Each of these actions would have sent a host of messages to the media about how damaging FEMA perceived the crisis to be. In many cases, the mechanism of response (i.e. issuing a statement, hosting a news conference) sends more signals to the media and the public than anything the spokesperson actually says (Fink, 2000, p.109).

FEMA chose to issue a statement from the Administrator and call the Congressman personally since those actions were on par with the level of crisis. Had the crisis been larger, FEMA could have hosted a news conference; had the crisis been smaller, FEMA could have issued a response from a field Public Information Officer. Finding the best level of response is a “Goldilocks” pursuit, where the organization must find a communication method that fits “just right.” The organization wants to look responsive—and in this case, sincerely apologetic—without giving the impression of defensiveness. A statement and a phone call to Rep. Harper allowed FEMA to respond without escalating and prolonging the story.

When finding the appropriate response mechanism, organizations must also understand the crisis in context. Crisis management team members must be able to determine if the crisis is a one-time event (where an employee made a mistake) or if the event is a part of a larger, ongoing crisis (like a systemic bad reputation) (Coombs, 2007). On May 21, the Mobile (Alabama) Press-Register ran an editorial that proclaimed, “FEMA just can’t stop its public relations blunders” and cited the videographer flap as another misstep of constantly fumbling agency (Press-Register, 2010). This type of media coverage shows that the t-shirt incident is only one part of a larger public relations crisis that has dogged FEMA since Hurricane Katrina. No matter what type of crisis the agency faces, the news media and the public will frame their opinion through the context of the agency’s poor reputation. Knowing this, the agency has tried—with varying amounts of success—to respond appropriately and contextually every time a potentially-damaging crisis occurs.

Conclusion

The misguided actions of a lone FEMA videographer created a public relations crisis for FEMA. Even though these actions took place in a small community in Mississippi, the event escalated to a point where FEMA’s most senior leader needed to make a public statement and personally reassure a Congressional member. FEMA was able to effectively handle this crisis by employing several crisis management strategies. FEMA responded quickly with a strong apology statement; the agency designated two spokesmen who did not deviate from the core messages; and FEMA responded to media inquiries through appropriate mechanisms, which conveyed an apologetic tone without defensiveness. Although FEMA still struggles to rebuild its reputation, these actions provide a positive case study for other organizations on how to respond and manage a public relations crisis.

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Globalization of Disasters and the Future of Emergency Management

By Timothy C. Oldham

MA EDM Student

This paper was originally written and submitted for EDMG509 in February 2011

The immediate globalization of disasters seemingly coincided with the launch of the Cable News Network (CNN) in the early 1980s. For the first time in U.S. history, proximal news reporting could arrive in the living rooms of America, live from the disaster site, in a moderate timeframe after occurrence. This, coupled with a 24/7 news channel, more immediately held accountable those responsible for protecting the citizenry and tugged at the heartstrings of compassionate Americans willing to help. Now, with CNN, reports of disasters and emergencies arrived to local emergency managers up to the White House virtually simultaneously with arrival in the homes of viewers. Capturing the moment to express concern for the humanitarian aspects of disaster and the announcement of impending response aid is crucial from a political stance for all levels of those responsible for implementing action in the midst of crisis is crucial (Sylves, 2008, p. 61). This new, around-the-globe type media provided an instant stage for these responsible persons to spread a message to the masses. Within a span of a decade from CNN going on the air, advancements in technology enabled global events to arrive in the home of Americans with only a few seconds delay from real-time from around the world. Ironically, in a strange twist of events, political officials and crisis responders now frequently monitor today's technologically advanced news outlets for a heads-up of breaking disaster news.

There is no greater example of the effect of real time media coverage than during the unfolding events of September 11, 2001. While viewers watched live coverage of the aftermath of the first plane hitting the first tower, America witnessed the second attack. At this point in time, President George W. Bush was in a second-grade classroom in Sarasota, Florida listening to schoolchildren read for him as a part of his education reform initiatives. As cameras rolled covering that event, Chief of Staff Andy Card leaned over to the President and whispered, “A second plane hit the second tower...America is under attack”. Understanding the gravity of the moment, the President knew that with the host of reporters present, now receiving updates about both planes on their blackberries, his reaction would be recorded and beamed throughout the world. President Bush recalled in his memoirs thinking that the nation would be in shock, but the President could not appear to be (Bush, 2010, p. 127).

Graphic, unedited, real-time video images, tells the story of human plight as nothing else, short of being there, can. It elicits immediate reaction, creates a sense of urgency, outrage, and provokes generosity while building solidarity in the citizenry. It can instantly mobilize the masses to actions (viz., monetary contributions to nongovernmental organizations which specialize in disaster relief, faith-based organizations who render aid or other event-specific relief funds).

The victims of disaster within our country and its territories are constituents of politicians. Regardless of whether directly elected by the citizens or appointed by those elected to an official response position (viz. emergency manager),
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real time media is a conduit to the constituency. In emergencies, it is not about those victims directly affected, who likely have limited to no access to media coverage, it is the portion of the non-affected constituency that must be played to, in the course of and in the aftermath of disaster. The disaster victims need rescue, aid, and assistance, and when delivered effectively, local officials will more than likely, at some point in the future, take an opportunity to remind those helped that their leadership obtained relief when it was needed. For the non-affected group, seeing their local officials “in action” provides a sense of calm reassurance that if it were their family, the same help would come to them also.

This ever-present media, beaming newsworthy disasters across the country and around the world, has required emergency management professionals to assume some new roles in addition to their operational tactician role, which include public relations, being a diplomat for political processes, and taking the reins of an emerging leadership responsibility that places more gravity on their response decision-making role. This obviously is placing greater and greater pressure on these and future professionals in this field to better prepare themselves for these adapting responsibilities.

Thus, the role of the emergency manager is in metamorphosis as duties expand and ever-changing threat-scapes continuously evolve. As discussed in the Brennan and Walker (2007) article outlining the job description of the future emergency manager, this is further explained. In essence, it implies that expanding roles and responsibilities for emergency managers will require them to not only implement the policies, procedures, and systems required for managing the mission, but also oversee the architecture of new operational strategies. Furthermore, the emergence of non-traditional (i.e., other than natural disasters) emergency response may require these professionals to adjust and adapt delivery of these strategies in the midst of unfolding incidents, thus requiring emergency managers to be able to determine the need for unscripted emergency response procedures when warranted (Brennan & Walker, 2007). This is truly a “think-on-your-feet” management concept. While many emergency management professionals are well-seasoned managers in the majority of preplanned all-hazard responses, the thought of doing away with traditional emergency response “playbooks” is one thing some may not be able to do efficiently. This approach requires veteran emergency managers to incorporate new methodologies and ideologies to become progressive leaders in this field.

In support of this, Whither the Emergency Manager (Britton, 1999) provides a review of Thomas Drabek’s book, Human System Responses to Disaster: An Inventory of Sociological Findings. Britton asserts that it is important to rethink the role of the emergency manager in our current, ever-evolving society and concludes that this book gives emergency managers the understanding needed to pursue these new avenues of sustainability, response methodologies, and risk management approaches in emergency management. Britton reviews the positive developments that have taken place in emergency management by recognizing its increased integration into matters of community planning to help with preparedness and mitigation instead of just recovery and response (Britton, 1999) which directly correlates to building communities that are more resilient. Next, Britton emphasizes ever-increasing professionalization citing increased educational options for emergency managers and how a broader, deeper knowledge base produces better quality research, analysis, and decision-making in this field. Finally, public interest in the field has increased forcing elected officials to increase their acceptance of the field and this has subsequently provided emergency managers with a broader platform to operate from increasing their influence over public perception and coordination with the private sector (Britton, 1999).

Britton also addresses his perceptions of issues that plague effective emergency management in today’s rapidly changing threat-scapes by tying an unnecessary reliance on the dominant role that Comprehensive Emergency Management (i.e., prescribed playbooks) (CEM) has held for several decades. In looking at this, Britton defined CEM as, “the responsibility and capability of a jurisdictional unit (nation, state, local area) to manage all types of emergencies and disasters by coordinating the actions of all the players involved” (Britton, 1999) based on reliance of the narrowly focused pillars of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery. In light of what CEM addresses, Britton then specifically looks at the role of an Emergency Manager as one who needs to form the nexus for coordinating community actions, understanding conditions that leads to risk and vulnerability, developing controls to mitigate those risks, and organizing the response and recovery efforts after a disaster. Expanded realms of concern for emergency managers would include environmental impact; quality of life for the citizenry; disaster resilience building; sustained economic vitality; and extensive inter- and intra-governmental relationship building. Britton concludes that incorporating these into public risk management provides a theory framework for progressive emergency managers to encompass this wider arena of operation (Britton, 1999).

In the end, Drabek’s Human System Responses to Disasters, provides a significant understanding for emergency managers to build a sustainable public risk framework. This, along with incorporating aspects of other disciplines such as social sciences, physical sciences, business administrations, and ecological considerations, all appear to be crucial to the future of emergency management.
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References

Disaster Relief Legislation: Incrementalism in Action

By S. Dawn Heyse
BA EDM Student
This paper was originally written and submitted for POLS410 in February 2011

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988, as amended (2007), provides the statutory authority for the majority of the Federal government’s disaster response activities. However, the Stafford Act is not an original piece of legislation—it did not spring fully-formed from the Congressional committee which gave it life. Rather, it is the result of over fifty years of incremental improvements and expansions in permanent, general Federal disaster relief legislation (Platt, 1999).

Dye (2011) defines incrementalism in public policy as the “continuation of past government activities” (p. 17) with only minor changes. In many areas, “policymakers generally accept the legitimacy of established programs and tacitly agree to continue” (Dye, 2011, p. 18) them, recognizing that regular review of all alternatives to established policy and their attendant consequences is impossible in most cases (p. 18). The lineage of the Stafford Act provides an excellent example of incrementalism.

The first permanent Federal disaster relief legislation, the Federal Disaster Act of 1950, P.L. 81-875, was not considered a precedent-setting piece of policy at the time it was enacted (Sylves, 2008). Its sponsor, Representative Hagen of Minnesota, cited over 100 separate acts of Congress preceding it which had provided relief funding for specific disasters (Bourgin, 1983, p. 1). The creation of permanent, general disaster relief legislation was viewed as beneficial in that it would be more efficient and relieve Congress of the need to draft a bill for every big disaster (Bourgin, 1983, p. 6). Additionally, it would reduce delays in aid reaching affected regions (Kreps, 1990), an unavoidable consequence of waiting for disaster-specific legislation.

Why did Congress choose to create permanent disaster relief legislation in this year rather than in some other? The exact motivation for making the Federal Disaster Act of 1950 permanent rather than disaster-specific is unknown (Bourgin, 1983, p. 5-6). However, the motivation for its proposal is not. Researchers have long considered the occurrence of a natural disaster to be an important step in the problem identification and agenda setting steps of disaster policymaking, referring to them as “focusing events” (Rubin, 2007; Birkland, 1996; Birkland, 2006).

In the aftermath of a disaster, dramatic media coverage and the necessity of responding to the event result in a spike in public and policymaker interest (Birkland, 1996). Tobin and Montz (1997) note, the “magnitude of the problem frequently is defined by the extent of loss caused by events” (p. 198), which suggests that high-consequence disasters may exert proportionately greater influence over subsequent policymaking. Birkland’s (1996) research identifies additional factors, including media coverage, groups favoring policy change, and total population affected by the disaster, increases in which compel Congress ever more strongly to take action.

The focusing event that drove the proposal and approval of the Federal Disaster Act of 1950 was a major flood along the Red River in Minnesota and North Dakota in the spring of that year (Bourgin, 1983, p. 4). Although only five people in the United States died due to the flood, the waters inundated approximately 2,800 square miles within the Red River basin, causing the greatest extent of flood damage ever experienced in that area up to that time (United States Geological Survey, 2009). This flood did heavy damage to county- and township-maintained roads and bridges, impacting the ability of farmers in this predominantly agricultural region to work their farms and transport produce; unfortunately, many of these local jurisdictions were struggling to pay for damages from flooding in previous years (Bourgin, 1983, p. 5). Numerous delegations from these counties and townships approached Congress, hat in hand (Bourgin, 1983, p. 5).

The Federal Disaster Act of 1950 met the recovery needs of these local jurisdictions, authorizing the Federal government to provide assistance to State and local governments in the temporary repair of public facilities damaged in major disasters (Bourgin, 1983, p. 7). For the local communities in North Dakota and Minnesota, this meant that the Federal
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government would help fund the repair of roads and bridges; for the national as a whole, the implications were broader.

Between 1953 (the first year in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) listing) and 1963, the President
declared an average of 15 major disasters annually (FEMA, 2011). However, 1964 saw the declaration of 25 major dis-
asters alone, and 1965 ultimately resulted in 25 declarations as well (FEMA, 2011). This string of calamities reawaken-
ed an “interest in disaster relief in Congress” (Bourgin, 1983, p. 35), which was brought to the point of decision by the
Palm Sunday tornado outbreak on April 11, 1965.

The Palm Sunday outbreak, a 12-hour-long series of tornado touchdowns in six states, killed 271 Americans and re-
sulted in over 3,400 injuries (Coenraads, 2006). Fifty-one tornadoes struck over fifty counties, causing over $1.1 billion
(2003 dollars) in damages; Michigan, Indiana and Ohio were hardest-hit (Coenraads, 2006). The Federal Disaster Act of
1950 was tested and found wanting (Bourgin, 1983, p. 36).

The disaster spurred immediate legislative action. Senator Bayh of Indiana took the lead in developing a bill to add
assistance for individuals to include temporary housing and to expand public assistance within the permanent disaster
relief legislation already in force (Bourgin, 1983, p. 36). The Senate passed Bayh’s bill within two months of the Palm
Sunday outbreak, but work in the House was slow; the bill was not heard in committee until seven months after the
event, and the committee did not take action on it until July 1966 (Bourgin, 1983, p. 36).

This delay, which may seem surprising in light of the speed with which the measure passed the Senate and the gen-
erally non-controversial nature of most disaster-related legislation, may be attributed to a variety of causes. First, the bill
collected a number of additional provisions over and above Senator Bayh’s original intent, the ultimate costs of which
were unclear (Bourgin, 1983, p.44-45). Discussion of these provisions lengthened its time in committee. Second, the
Federal agencies charged with administering disaster relief programs opposed altering the existing law; the current and
former directors of the Office of Emergency Planning provided testimony indicating that the agency’s existing legal au-
thority covered the provisions of the proposed bill (Bourgin, 1983, p. 47). These reservations resulted in months of de-
lay.

The Disaster Relief Act of 1966, P.L. 89-769, was signed into law November 6, 1966, a drastically different creature
from Senator Bayh’s bill. Most of the original content was stripped out; what remained included allowing unincorporated
communities public assistance funding, and providing funding to repair public facilities under construction, as well as to
repair public higher education facilities (Birkland, 2006). Senator Bayh did not give up on the sections that did not make
the cut, however; he introduced legislation with them into the next two Congresses (Bourgin, 1983, p. 52).

Unfortunately, for this legislation to be acted on it took the occurrence of another major disaster. As Bayh’s bill was lan-
guishing in committee, Hurricane Camille made landfall on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, razing a swathe of the Mississippi,
Alabama and Louisiana coastline with high winds and storm surge. It proceeded inland, causing deadly flooding in West
Virginia and Virginia. Hurricane Camille’s winds and waters killed 256 people and did $1.4 billion in damage (Tobin and
Montz, 1997, p. 122). The widespread devastation and great suffering caused by the hurricane captured the attention of
lawmakers, particularly those representing the affected states, some of whom occupied positions vital to the speedy pas-
sage of the bill (Bourgin, 1983, p. 63). The Disaster Relief Act of 1969, P.L. 91-79, was signed into law on October 1,
1969, about a month and a half after the hurricane’s impact (Bourgin, 1983, p. 56).

Sympathy for the hurricane’s victims and concern for the economic recovery of the affected regions were certainly
considerations in the brisk passage of P.L. 91-79, but another circumstance must have contributed as well: the inclusion
in P.L. 91-79 of a sunset provision. The majority of the sections in the legislation would expire December 31, 1970
unless reauthorized (Bourgin, 1983, p. 62).

Temporary or not, the law represented a major expansion of disaster relief programs. Major provisions included de-
bris removal from private property and individual assistance including temporary housing, food coupons and unemploy-
ment assistance (Birkland, 2006). P.L. 91-79 also included the first grants for state-level disaster planning, encouraging
the states to develop their own programs for individual assistance in the wake of a disaster (Bourgin, 1983, p. 60).

Congress had a little over a year to reauthorize the extended provisions, come up with replacement legislation, or
revert to the previously-enacted law. Senator Bayh, now the Chairman of the Senate Disaster Relief Subcommittee, be-
gan work by holding hearings in two of the states most affected by Camille, Mississippi and Virginia (Bourgin, 1983, p
72). The response was poor. The Nixon administration’s handling of the response was viewed as “haphazard and bun-
gled” (Sylves, 2008, p. 51), creating a “public relations debacle” (Sylves, 2008, p. 51). Congress was handed a golden
opportunity to evaluate existing disaster relief policy, and again, found it did not fill the bill.

Senator Bayh developed an omnibus bill to completely replace P.L. 81-875, which, with minor revisions, passed both
the Senate and House committees and was signed into law as the Disaster Relief Act of 1970, P.L. 91-606 on December
31, 1970. Though it repealed P.L. 81-875, the new law in effect only reauthorized the provisions of the 1969 law, though
it added grants for temporary housing or relocation as well as providing funds for legal services for disaster survivors

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(Birkland, 2006).

The new law was swiftly found to contain unanticipated gaps. A little over a month after the bill was signed, the San Fernando earthquake of February 1971 damaged numerous public and private nonprofit hospitals (Bourgin, 1983, p. 105). Though repairs to the public facilities were covered under existing legislation, no provision was made for private facilities, which made up a significant percentage of the available medical care in that area (Bourgin, 1983, p. 105). Recognizing that private nonprofit medical facilities play a vital role in providing public care nationwide, and that their repair was as essential as that of any public facility, the Senators and Representatives from California introduced bills to amend P.L. 91-606, allowing these types of facilities to receive disaster grants for repair and reconstruction (Rubin, 2007). This bill became P.L. 92-209 on December 8, 1971 (Bourgin, 1983, p. 106).


Dissatisfied that the current disaster relief legislation formed a comprehensive program that offered consistent and equitable assistance to victims of different disasters, Congress included a section in P.L. 92-385 that directed the President to “conduct a thorough review of existing disaster relief legislation” (Bourgin, 1983, p. 117). The President was charged to provide a report to Congress with recommendations for a complete revision of disaster relief legislation by January 1, 1973 (Bourgin, 1983, p. 120).

President Nixon appointed a task force to conduct the review headed by the director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness and the deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget and staffed by members of the OEP and other Federal agencies, as well as by officials from the American Red Cross, the National Research Council, the Council of State Governments and other organizations (Bourgin, 1983, p. 125). The recommendations made by this task force were submitted as a bill to the Senate, but as they reversed “the trend of expanding Federal disaster assistance” (Bourgin, 1983, p. 124), the bill stagnated in committee. Perversely, Senate testimony seems to indicate that, except for specific issues, P.L. 91-606 was considered a good piece of legislation that did not require major changes (Bourgin, 1983, p. 123).

The Chairman of the Senate Disaster Relief Subcommittee, Senator Burdick, began work on an alternative by holding public hearings in locations that had been hit with major disasters in the recent past (Bourgin, 1983, p. 141). These were followed up by three days of hearings on the President’s proposed legislation in September 1973 (Bourgin, 1983, p. 141). The end result was a bill that reprised P.L. 91-606 with major additions from the administration’s proposal (Bourgin, 1983, p. 146). Burdick introduced his version of legislation in February 1974 (Bourgin, 1983, p. 145). Committee work began on the bill with no particular sense of urgency, but it would not be long before its passage became a pressing concern (Bourgin, 1983, p. 148).

On April 3 and 4, 1974, thirteen states were assaulted by a series of 148 tornadoes over the course of sixteen hours in an event known as the “Super Outbreak” (Coenraads, 2006). The tornadoes cut nearly 2,600 miles of damage path, killing 315 and injuring 5,484 (Coenraads, 2006). Total damage done by the rash of storms reached $600 million (1974 dollars); 7,000 homes were damaged in one state alone (Coenraads, 2006). Calls for relief were immediate.

The Senate responded immediately, passing Burdick’s bill unanimously on April 10 (Bourgin, 1983, p. 151). The House did not move as quickly; however, the disagreements were resolved in the Conference Committee expeditiously enough that the completed bill was presented to the President for signature on May 22, 1974 (Bourgin, 1983, p. 216). The addition of the requirement for reauthorization three years hence may have facilitated its acceptance, as in the case of P.L. 91-79.

The Disaster Relief Act of 1974, P.L. 93-288, broadened the definition of “major disaster” and added the category of “emergency” for incidents which could receive Federal aid; most previously-existing categories of aid were broadened (Birkland, 2006). A new class of individual assistance, the Individual and Family Grant program, was instituted under the act, allowing grants to be disbursed for the repair or replacement of “personal property or vehicles, housing repairs, flood insurance, and disaster-related medical, dental, or funeral bills” (General Accounting Office, 1989). Temporary housing assistance was expanded to allow temporary manufactured homes to be transferred to the victims of disaster; another new authorization provided crisis counseling for them (Rubin, 2007).

Public Law 93-288 also included the first congressional requirement for hazard mitigation as a precondition for Federal disaster assistance (Platt, 1999, p. 78), foreshadowing later mitigation legislation. The “all-hazards approach” to disasters was another new feature of this law, encouraging the development of generic capabilities to address disasters of any type (Sylves, 2008). The Disaster Relief Act of 1974 would serve as the basis of disaster relief policy for fourteen

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years (Birkland, 2006).

The rationale for changes in disaster relief policy between 1974 and the enactment of the Stafford Act in 1988 are not so clear, buried as they are in Congressional records. However, trends may be discerned that could explain the changes seen in the next major piece of Federal disaster legislation.

A sense that P.L. 93-288 was generally satisfactory to most parties may be construed from its reauthorization in 1977 (Birkland, 2006). It was reauthorized yet again in 1980, indicating that Congress considered it to be meeting its intent (Birkland, 2006). The consolidation of the various disaster relief and response authorities into a single entity, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, in 1979, also seems to suggest that any issues with disaster relief were believed to reside in its administration, not necessarily the authorizing law (Congressional Research Service, 2006).

Another trend can be seen in the ever-increasing cost of disaster relief. Between 1953 and 1964, 174 major disaster declarations were made, resulting in expenditures of over $1.4 billion in 2005 dollars (Rubin, 2007). For the period 1971-1978, 264 major disasters were declared, with $8.4 billion (2005 dollars) in resulting expenditures (Rubin, 2007). Between 1977 and 1993, estimated disaster-related expenses reached $119 billion (1993 dollars) (Platt, 1999), for 484 declared disasters (FEMA, 2011). Though it is obvious that the numbers of declared disasters increased, disaster expenditures grew explosively due to the expansion of assistance provisions over time.

This trend in cost increases doubtless fueled attempts at direct control. FEMA implemented a cost-sharing policy requiring State and local jurisdictions to contribute 25% of their eligible public assistance relief funding in May 1980 (GAO, 1982a). This policy was resisted by State officials, who believed such strictures would result in their being responsible for more than their ability to pay (GAO, 1982a). The General Accounting Office reviewed the disaster declaration process, finding that FEMA’s methods of evaluation lacked consistency and were poorly understood by State and local officials, hampering their requests (GAO, 1981). The GAO recommended that Congress amend the law to clarify the types of events that would qualify for disaster assistance, but no action was taken on that subject (GAO, 1981).

The GAO (1982b) also found that FEMA was providing public assistance to State and local jurisdictions for expenses that it judged they should be able to provide for themselves, such as paying the salary of local government workers temporarily assigned to disaster relief work; equipment being employed temporarily for disaster relief work; and repairs to or reconstruction of uninsured public facilities. Recommendations to cease unnecessary public assistance were not implemented (Sylves, 2008, p. 57).

FEMA proposed legislation to limit disaster relief expenditures by lowering the Federal cost-share from 75% to 50%, as well as to exclude special districts from public assistance (Platt, 1999). The agency also proposed to limit eligibility for disaster declarations by implementing a “state deductible” derived from “a per capita minimum dollar amount adjusted by the ratio of the state/local price index to the national index” (Platt, 1999, p. 19). Congress strongly objected to these proposals and they were withdrawn (Sylves, 2008, p. 57).

Moves towards indirect control of costs through mitigation were evident as well. Many disaster researchers believe that the increase in disaster declarations results at least partially from an increase in development in hazard-prone areas (Tobin and Montz, 1997; Platt, 1999; Schwab, Eschelbach and Brower, 2007). Federal largesse in the wake of disasters may serve to reduce the consequences of such development by subsidizing the owners’ risk, creating a “moral hazard” whereby disaster relief programs encourage the losses they are meant to relieve (Platt, 1999, p. 37). A GAO (1980) report on federal disaster assistance suggested that the policies in place did not do enough to dissuade individuals from developing hazard-prone areas. As hazard mitigation was an assigned mission of FEMA from its inception (Platt, 1999, p. 79), perhaps it is only natural that an increasing emphasis on mitigation can be seen.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988, signed into law on November 23, 1988, encouraged mitigation through the new Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, which provided post-disaster funds to states which prepared a mitigation plan (Birkland, 2006). Individual assistance programs that were continued included temporary housing assistance (including mortgage or rent payments) for up to 18 months, cash grants (raised to a maximum of $10,000 (GAO, 1989)), immediate temporary shelter, funding for home repair, assistance for disaster-related unemployment, debris removal (in certain circumstances), emergency food, low-income legal assistance, and crisis counseling (Congressional Research Service, 2005).

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Public assistance for State, local and tribal governments and some private nonprofit organizations under the Stafford Act continued to authorize “repair, reconstruction or replacement of infrastructure and recreational facilities” (Congressional Research Service, 2005). Emergency protective measures, emergency communications and transportation systems were also funded, as were loans to replace lost tax revenue or to meet disaster relief cost-sharing requirements (Congressional Research Service, 2005).

Congress has continued its long tradition of incremental modifications to the Stafford Act since its adoption in 1988. Some modifications have expanded its mitigation programs and established more specific criteria for declaration determinations (Congressional Research Service, 2010). Others have increased eligibility for public assistance and created new individual assistance programs (Congressional Research Service, 2010). Still other changes have allowed the Federal government to take a more proactive stance in the face of imminent disaster (Congressional Research Service, 2010). Each revision serves to illustrate why, after over fifty years, Federal disaster relief policy continues to serve as “a textbook example of incremental decision making” (Platt, 1999, p. 39).

References


http://www.shakeout.org/centralus/register/
CERT Provides Opportunity to Gain Experience

By S. Dawn Heyse
IAEM-USA at APUS Treasurer

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, a part of Citizen Corps, provides many opportunities for Emergency and Disaster Management students who are not currently working in the field to gain valuable experience and practical knowledge while assisting in their communities’ disaster preparation. Local CERT programs are sponsored by State, county and local emergency management, fire departments and police departments. They may be found in every state (except Mississippi) as well as in the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Northern Marianas Islands.

CERT educates ordinary citizens about preparing for the hazards their communities face and trains them to help their neighbors when professional emergency services personnel are not immediately available in the wake of a disaster. The experience of citizens helping their neighbors during the Mexico City earthquake led the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) to begin developing the CERT concept in 1985. Spontaneous, untrained volunteers in Mexico City saved 800 of their neighbors, but 100 people were killed attempting to save their fellow man. LAFD leaders realized that spontaneous volunteers would be a given in a large-scale disaster, and began working prevent needless loss of life through citizen training and education. The Federal Emergency Management Agency adopted LAFD’s concept in 1993.

The CERT course will benefit anyone who completes it. CERT training includes classes and hands-on exercises covering topics like disaster preparedness, fire safety, light search and rescue, disaster medical operations, and team organization. The training program materials are maintained by FEMA; a FEMA Independent Study course, IS-317, is available for individuals wishing to preview the course, or CERT volunteers wanting a refresher. However, to become a fully-trained and certified CERT member, you must complete a local CERT program’s classroom training.

For more information on the Community Emergency Response Team program, or to find a CERT program near you, please visit the national CERT website at:

http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/

Masters of Disaster Distinguished Speakers Series
recordings now available online!

AMU/APU Student Affairs posted our recordings of the previous 2010 Distinguished Speaker Series events, hosted by our IAEM Student Chapter. If you missed them or would like to hear them again, here they are:

Dr. Thomas Phelan: http://wpc.242F.edgecastcdn.net/00242F/academics/schools/public_safety_health/audio_recordings/phelan_mod.mp3


Dr. Wayne Blanchard: http://wpc.242F.edgecastcdn.net/00242F/academics/schools/public_safety_health/audio_recordings/blanchard.mp3

Mr. George Haddow: http://wpc.242F.edgecastcdn.net/00242F/academics/schools/public_safety_health/audio_recordings/haddow.mp3

Professor Emeritus Dr. Thomas Drabek: http://wpc.242F.edgecastcdn.net/00242F/academics/schools/public_safety_health/audio_recordings/drabek_call.mp3

Mr. Daryl Spiewak: http://wpc.242F.edgecastcdn.net/00242F/academics/schools/public_safety_health/audio_recordings/010611/Speiwak.mp3
The IAEM-USA Student Chapter @ APUS Presents:

Masters of Disaster
Distinguished Speaker Series

Claire B. Rubin

Please stay tuned—the date/time Ms. Rubin will join us will be announced soon!
Books of Interest

**Emergency Management: The American Experience, 1900-2005, edited by Claire B. Rubin.** Public Entity Risk Institute, 2007. 274p. From the Public Entity Risk Institute website at http://www.riskinstitute.org: Emergency Management: The American Experience 1900-2005 covers more than a century of catastrophic events including earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, a pandemic, and an explosion. Each chapter examines a time period that was pivotal in the evolution of emergency management functions and systems in the United States. The book addresses emergency management policy and administrative changes that have been implemented over the past century and provides historical context for the changes. Funded by PERI, the book was edited by Claire B. Rubin and designed for use as a textbook for college courses and a resource for policymakers, researchers, and emergency managers. A $5.00 discount is available to students who purchase the book as a textbook for a college course. To receive the discount, enter the code “STUDENT” during the checkout process in the coupon code field.

**Plagues and Peoples, by William H. McNeill.** Anchor, 1977. 365p. From back cover: With the rise of newly emerging viruses like Ebola, HIV, Mad Cow Disease, and the like, historian William H. McNeill’s landmark book on how infectious disease has impacted and even altered the course of human history is now more relevant than ever. Reissued with a new introduction and a chapter discussing the influence of AIDS on contemporary times, Plagues and Peoples explores the political, demographic, and psychological effects of disease on the human race over the entire sweep of human history, from prehistory to the present. Exhaustively researched and compulsively readable, this revolutionary book offers a radical reinterpretation of world history as we know it.

WANTED!
Your book recommendations!

Have you read a good book on an EM-related topic? If you think your fellow students would find it interesting too, please submit a brief write-up on it, following the format shown above. A thumbnail of the cover would be appreciated, as well. Send your book recommendations to Dawn Heyse via OrgSync!

The Federal Emergency Management Agency now has a blog! Come join the ongoing conversation with other stakeholders before, during and after disasters at

http://blog.fema.gov

Are you an undergraduate or graduate Emergency Management or Homeland Security student?
Are you committed to excellence in your chosen profession?
Do you want to stand out among your peers?

Epsilon Pi Phi, the Emergency Management Honor Society, may be for you!

Membership criteria may be viewed at http://www.ffhea.org/3364.html

For more information, contact the APUS Chapter of Epsilon Pi Phi at apus.epp@gmail.com
**Trivia Challenge**

*Think you're smarter than the student to your left and right? Take the Guardian Trivia Challenge* and find out!

1. In what year did Congress pass the first disaster relief legislation?
   a. 1803  
   b. 1900  
   c. 1950  
   d. 1974

2. For what type of incident did Congress pass the first disaster relief legislation?
   a. hurricane  
   b. flood  
   c. fire  
   d. earthquake

3. Under what authority was the Federal Emergency Management Agency created?
   a. Public Law 91-79  
   b. Reorganization Act of 1979  
   d. Executive Order 12127

4. Who was the first FEMA head to have experience as a state emergency manager?
   a. Michael D. Brown  
   b. James L. Witt  
   c. W. Craig Fugate  
   d. Joe M. Allbaugh

The first student to email the correct answers to all questions to Dawn Heyse thru OrgSync wins the prize below! If no one answers all correctly, the prize will go to the first student submitting the most correct answers. The answers and the name of the winner will be printed in the next issue of the Guardian! *Contest open to students only!

**Trivia Challenge Prize!**

The Winner of this issue’s Trivia Challenge will receive a pocket-sized copy of the 2008 Emergency Response Guidebook, a guidebook for first responders during the initial phase of a dangerous goods/hazardous materials transportation incident, **AS WELL AS** a Mystery Emergency Preparedness Item!

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**Answers to the November/December 2010 Trivia Challenge:**

1. c. Individual and the public officials  
2. b. The local level  
3. b. recovery  
4. d. response  
5. c. 5, 7, 9, 13, 15  
6. c. 4  
7. b. none

The winner, with 7 out of 7 correct, was IAEM Student Chapter member **Ray Walden**!

Ray received a pocket-sized copy of the 2008 Emergency Response Guidebook, pictured at left, **AS WELL AS** a Workplace/Auto Emergency Supply Kit In a Bottle, which includes a BPA-free water bottle, a small tote bag, a combination whistle/flashlight/flasher, a small utility knife, a mini-first aid kit (with alcohol wipes and 1 pair vinyl exam gloves), an emergency poncho, an emergency blanket, an N95 dust mask, 2 hand warmers, and family emergency planning information printed on water-resistant paper.

**Congratulations to Ray, and thanks to all who played!**