

## Managerial Strategies

The fundamental goal of Comprehensive Emergency Management is to create and maintain an effective interagency organization to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from major threats to lives and livelihoods. A fundamental assumption is that plans alone are not effective unless they are supported by people and a process brought together by good management skills.

It is important to remember that the entire community responds to and is involved with disaster. Likewise, the response within the VA Medical Center will certainly involve everyone in some way. There must be concern, interest, support and participation by everyone in the facility; otherwise you will not have a true comprehensive emergency management program. Without widespread involvement, you will have a "vacuum program," doomed to fail should disaster occur.

*Obtaining and maintaining support and involvement is one of the key elements of the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator's functions.*

It is useful, then, to review studies conducted on how local emergency management agency directors/coordinators developed and maintained their programs which must involve a highly diverse group of agencies and organizations.

### The Iowa State University Studies (1962-1975)

Beginning in 1962, a team of researchers ran a study of 66 directors of local civil defense (CD) agencies in Iowa. In subsequent years, the data set was enlarged to include similar interviews with local directors in Minnesota, Georgia, and Massachusetts. From the start, these researchers were seeking information on role performance.

"While many factors were found to be related to the effectiveness levels of local coordinators, the types of linkages between civil defense programs and community elites and their activities were discovered to be most critical. Thus, horizontal linkage patterns, like time spent with one's counterparts elsewhere in the state or region (Mulford, Klonglan, and Tweed, 1973, p. 8), proved to be predictive of higher performance levels and job satisfaction." <sup>1</sup>

Six different types of managerial strategies used by these local directors to develop and maintain their programs:

"1) **Audience strategy** "...the task of educating individuals and organizations as to the functions and necessity of community preparedness."

2) **Resource building strategy** "...the acquisition of

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personnel, equipment and funds needed to build the organization's operation capacity."

3) **Emergency resource strategy** "...the degree that a local coordinator can secure the participation of an organization for the duration of time when he is anticipating, responding to and following a disaster."

4) **Cooptation strategy** "...the process by which organizations...absorb key people, including members of other organizations into its formal structures, e.g., board of directors, as a means of protecting the organization from threats to its stability."

5) **Elite representation strategy** "...the placement of one organization's member...on the board of another organization, or in situations where the representative can interact with key people."

6) **Constituency strategy** "...the establishment of a relationship between two organizations whereby one of the two benefits directly from the activities of the other."

While they could not explore the matter in depth, the Iowa State team concluded "...the extent of use of **diverse...strategies** varies

considerably on the basis of **environmental, organizational and coordinator characteristics.**"<sup>2</sup>  
(Emphasis added).

From this information, and from data he gathered in similar studies, Thomas Drabek developed a "*Theoretical Model of Community Response Capability*," which we have adapted to apply to the perspective of the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.

**Environmental characteristics** include Unique Extra-Facility Disaster Events, those significant events that shape Federal Policies, which have an impact upon Departmental Policies. Local Disaster Events have an impact upon the **organizational characteristics** which include Facility Size, Facility Administration, and the Facility Acceptance of Emergency Management. Finally, the Facility's Response Capability is directly affected by the Managerial Strategies Used, and these are affected by the **Manager's Characteristics**, the extent of his/her Interorganizational Network, and perhaps most importantly, the Structure and Integrity of the program in terms of the Facility Administration.

## Strategies and the Disaster Planning Process

"Reflecting observations gleaned from over 200

postdisaster studies, Dynes, Quarantelli, and Kreps (1972) offered important insights into the disaster planning process - a process which must be regarded as continuous and ongoing, not one that is completed when a notebook has been printed.

Local directors must assist personnel ... to realize that disaster responses differ qualitatively from routine emergencies in six important ways:

- 1) Uncertainty
- 2) Urgency
- 3) The development of emergency consensus
- 4) Expansion of the citizenship role
- 5) Convergence, and
- 6) Deemphasis of contractual and impersonal relationships (adapted from Dynes, Quarantelli, and Kreps, 1972, pp. 48-49).

Furthermore, planning for disasters must be differentiated from the principles that guide management of an emergency (Quarantelli, 1984). While complementary, the two tasks must not be confused:

#### **Principles of disaster planning:**

- a. A continuous process
- b. Reducing the unknowns in a problematic situation
- c. Evoking appropriate actions

- d. What is likely to happen
- e. Based on valid knowledge
- f. Focused on general principles
- g. An educational activity
- h. Overcoming resistances
- i. Testing
- j. Not management

#### **Principles of emergency management:**

- (1) **Agent-generated demands;**
  - a. **Warning**
  - b. **Pre-impact preparation**
  - c. **Search and rescue**
  - d. **Care of injured and dead**
  - e. **Welfare needs**
  - f. **Restoration of essential community services**
  - g. **Protection against continuing threat**
  - h. **Community order**
- (2) **Response-generated demands;**
  - a. **Communication**
  - b. **Continuing assessment of disaster situation**
  - c. **Mobilization and utilization of human and**

- materiel  
resources
- d. **Coordination**
  - e. **Exercise of authority"**  
(Quarantelli, 1981).<sup>3</sup>  
**(Emphasis added).**

## Building Cooperation and Coordination

"In 1985, John Sorenson and Dennis Mileti capsulized much of the research history on interorganizational relations and the impact that these relationships have on response effectiveness. It was their contention that five main relationship concepts can be extracted from previous studies. Interorganizational response effectiveness can be attributed to these five categories of conditions:

1. Domain Consensus and role specification
2. Network definition and integration
3. Communication
4. Maintenance of autonomy
5. Flexibility and the capability to improvise.

**Domain Consensus and role specification:** This means that if everyone knows what their job is and where everyone else fits in as well, then the overall response effectiveness will be high. Shared knowledge along this front, also escalates coordination and enhances the

integration of tasks across organizations because it facilitates clear lines of authority and eliminates conflict.

**Network definition and integration:** If too many organizations are integrated into a network, effectiveness can actually decrease. However, those organizations who are used to interacting with each other are easier to coordinate for interaction during an disaster or emergency. If organizations have overlapping members, or the same people on boards, panels, committees, and the like, coordination is also enhanced. By the same token, creation of what might be termed boundary personnel (people who are charged with interorganizational interaction), usually guarantee that interaction and cooperation occurs. If nothing else, this will insure that knowledge about other organizations is proliferated among the groups. This factor alone creates better coordination.

**Communication:** Communication within and among the diverse organizations involved both before and during an incident is essential to effective response. Organizations must communicate about their specialized roles and tasks that are being performed during the emergency conditions. Also quick dissemination of changing conditions and specific factors must be known immediately by all factions involved.

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**Maintenance of autonomy:**

Nearly all organizations involved in a major response will struggle vehemently to maintain their autonomy. This is especially true during the planning and preparedness phases of emergency management. Somehow, organizations must be convinced that temporary or minor losses of autonomy should be accepted in the interest of more effective coordinated response.

**Flexibility and the capability**

**to improvise:** No plan, element, formalization or standardization of procedure, task, or expectation should be taken as rigid literal translation. Disasters and major emergencies are unique unpredictable events that require flexibility and adaptation from planned roles, assigned tasks, authority relationships, communication channels and domain consensus. Effective disaster operations require flexibility, adaptation, and the ability to improvise." <sup>4</sup>

## Advice for New Managers

"All of the directors were asked the following question at the end of the interview: *"If you were in conversation with a new emergency management director - someone just starting out - what would be the two or three most important pieces of advice you would offer...?"*

### General Strategies and Approaches

None of this advice will fit every situation; however, these 12 themes provide important food for thought.

- 1) Meet and greet agency heads
- 2) Establish personal credibility and commitment
- 3) Use past experience
- 4) Research your community
- 5) Ascertain the level of commitment and mission
- 6) Engage in consensus-building activities
- 7) Seek to coordinate, not control
- 8) Increase public awareness and knowledge
- 9) Establish media relationships
- 10) Continue professional development
- 11) Establish a professional network
- 12) Tenacity is essential" <sup>5</sup>

## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> Drabek, Thomas E., **The Professional Emergency Manager: Structures and Strategies for Success**, University of Colorado, Institute of Behavioral Science, 1987, pp. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 55-56.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 58-59.

<sup>4</sup> LaValla, Patrick and Stoffel, Robert, **Creating Interagency Cooperation and**

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Coordination, **Blueprint for Community  
Emergency Management: A Text for  
Managing Emergency Operations**,  
Emergency Response Institute, Inc.,  
Olympia, WA., 1992, pp.168-169.

<sup>5</sup> Drabek, Thomas E., **The  
Professional Emergency Manager:  
Structures and Strategies for Success**,  
University of Colorado, Institute of  
Behavioral Science, 1987, pp. 236-243.