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Three Perspectives on Preparedness

The three interviews conducted shared many similarities in approaching preparedness while remaining distinct in their goals. With Thomas Chin discussing his role as an Emergency Services Coordinator for San Francisco, it was immediately clear that the primary goal of the government in disaster preparedness is communication. Their target population is a large one, from major cities to the state to even the nation as well as internationally, and they aim to communicate inter-professionally and provide forewarning of an event in order to bolster a more effective and efficient response. As Chin mentioned, this manifests in the provision of services like continual 911 responses to individual events such as heart attacks while the disaster is occurring, or placing an alert system to mobilize people to preparation and response. The government must not only communicate with the people but within its own sectors as well as other outside agencies to ensure optimal performance prior, during, and after the disaster takes place. The goal of communication in government also serves as a tool to ensure the government's function as a regulator to the people.

The next interview with Carmela Hinderaker as the Director of Business Continuity at C&S Wholesale Grocers exemplified the goals of businesses during a disaster as a service provider. Hinderaker highlighted how numerous major companies from Ralph's to Whole Foods monitor the likelihood of an impending disaster to guarantee they are equipt with the necessary resources to provide for people throughout that period, not only to make certain they will thrive as a business, but also to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of their populations at the most basic level, and ultimately keep the national economy afloat. It was particularly shocking how any disaster could completely agitate the normal supply chain (e.g. the unforeseen toilet paper shortage at the start of COVID-19), and so a business's role in disaster preparedness is completely vital to the success of enduring and recovering as well.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Peter Miller's interview on the 9/11 preparedness and disaster response emphasized how community and individual level preparation such as through training or even general knowledge could mean a matter of life or death. As disasters are so volatile and with never wholly foreseen circumstances, there are major catastrophes like that which took place on Miller's 65th office floor that can isolate people from the vital services of first-responders. The actions, or inactions, of the few initial moments of an emergency, can completely change the outcome of the event. As the interview highlighted, most people in the building were entirely unaware of how to react to such a scenario, and only a few who had remote prior experience were able to react swiftly and accordingly. Fear and freezing up can be unavoidable in these shocking cases, but the greater number of people who are trained to know what to do during these events could have meant more lives saved. In the end, the three interviews may have shown the key differences between the roles of each of the government, business, and community level preparedness but they ultimately serve to provide everyone with tools to survive and thrive through trying times.