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Three Perspectives on Preparedness

The first interview was with Mr. Chin, who is a response coordinator in the San Francisco dept of Emergency Management, where he describes it as working “outside the yellow tape”. The goal of this department is to attend to emergencies in the whole city rather than certain incidents. Their goal is to be able to have people like their trained police officers and firefighters and themselves simultaneously tend to an emergency such as a heart attack and a disaster such as an earthquake or something of a larger magnitude. Additionally, there is an alert, warning, and notification system which is used for amber alerts, tornadoes, and hurricanes. Therefore, their ability to respond to both emergencies and disasters can be accounted for quickly¹.

The next interview was with Ms. Hinderaker, who is the director of Business Continuity. She initially started working with disaster planning in NYC for events such as a radiological bomb threat and hurricanes such as Hurricane Irene. It’s interesting that she mentioned EMAC because this is a service where states help each other in times of disaster, so when Hurricane Sandy happened in NYC while she was in Boston, she was still able to go and help with her Boston team, which I found very important. I also found it important and great to hear that they learn from one event in preparation for the next, which was certainly shown from hurricane Irene to Sandy in terms of the preparedness and response³.

Finally, the last interview was with Mr. Miller, who is a World Trade Center Survivor. During this event, he recounts that there were long waiting periods for instructions and next steps. However, the evacuation was ultimately a success because although it seemed like no one truly knew the building structure, several people found the stairs and were able to get many people out that way. Additionally, the term “emergent norm” was mentioned, which is when someone takes charge of the group, normally someone with training. However, that was what Miller became on 9/11 as he did not wait for instructions and instead inspected his surroundings to get himself and his coworkers down to safety. After this tragic event, fire codes changed, the role of the director of high-rise buildings changed, and people realized their biggest allies during disasters are their neighbors and coworkers². Overall, these three interviews had a few similarities such as the fact that everyone said that they learn from the past disaster to prepare for the next which is so important and has shown to be a success. Another great similarity between all three people in the interviews is that they all exerted a level of certainty and hope, which helped them get through each disaster successfully. One contrast between the three interviews is the type of disaster they were speaking about, whether it be a violent attack such as the Boston Marathon bombings and 9/11, or a horrific disaster such as Hurricane Irene or an earthquake in San Francisco, however, all three interviewees would be more than qualified to attend to these disasters.

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References

1. Chin, T., n.d. *Interview with Thomas Chin, Response Coordinator, SF Dept of Emergency Management.*
2. Gordon, E., 2015. *What we learned about disaster response from 9/11 - WHY?* [online] WHY?. Available at: <<https://why.org/segments/what-we-learned-about-disaster-response-from-911/>> [Accessed 30 March 2022].
3. Hinderaker, C., n.d. *Interview with Carmela Hinderaker, Director of Business Continuity*