

## Brief: Three Perspectives on Preparedness

Preparedness is a major component of disaster and emergency management. Preparedness entails the planning done and resources collected *before* a disaster, to ensure the safety of the people and environment impacted during an emergency event. Thomas Chin, Carmela Hinderaker, and Peter Miller have unique backgrounds, but each of them have distinct insights into how preparedness is conducted at the government, business, and community/individual levels.

In chapter 5 of Introduction to *International Disaster Management*, Damon P. Coppola identifies the five general categories of a government's preparedness actions: planning, exercise, training, equipment, and statutory authority. As the response coordinator for San Francisco's Department of Emergency Management, one of Thomas' responsibilities is the training and management of duty officers. He also oversees alert, warning, and notification systems that inform people of impending threats. This is a clear example of government preparedness. His work with duty officers, who he explains are the "primary point[s] of contact for disasters in the city", falls under the planning and training categories. His work notifying businesses and the general public of forthcoming events falls under the statutory authority category. Governments have to work with both public and private entities in their emergency preparedness to ensure all stakeholders are able to prepare and respond accordingly.

Shifting away from government preparedness, Carmela and Peter provide insight into how businesses and communities participate in emergency preparedness. Carmela's work in the private sector via C&S Wholesale Grocers includes business continuity, which she describes as "a sister industry to emergency management". Governments are not the only bodies with Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs). Ideally, both businesses and families will have EOPs in case of a disaster, and for businesses, that consists of a business continuity plan. Carmela's supervision of the supply chain impacts both vendors (businesses) and customers (communities/individuals). Moreover, disruptions in the supply chain from natural disasters can prevent stores from carrying the very supplies that people would need in the event of an emergency, such as food, clothing, first aid, and more. This affects people at all levels, making the connection between businesses and the general public clear. Coppola defines public preparedness as "actions taken to empower ordinary citizens to help themselves, their families, their neighbors, and complete strangers". Peter's experience of 9/11 helps us see the steps that individuals/communities take in emergency preparedness and response. In this instance, he reveals how people were *not* adequately prepared. From being unfamiliar with building structure and exits, to remaining in place when that wasn't appropriate, this lack of preparedness had the potential to cause more harm. However, the lessons learned from the September 11th attacks led to a number of reforms to ensure safety for future emergency events. New York City updated its building codes for the first time in three decades, which included more training for both safety officers *and* occupants. Preparedness measures at all three levels work together to protect people, as well as the spaces they inhabit.

## References

- Coppola, D. P. (2015). *Introduction to International Disaster Management*. Elsevier.
- Gordon, E. (2015). *What we learned about disaster response from 9/11*. WHYY, Philadelphia Educational Radio Corporation.