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Global Disaster Preparedness and Response
Gershon Spring 2023

Assignment: Brief - Three Perspectives on Preparedness

Government Preparedness

Thomas Chin, Response Coordinator, San Francisco Dept of Emergency Management describes his role in preparedness as being focused on alert and warning systems throughout the city not just for incidence points but beyond the “yellow tape” and encompassing the entire metropolitan area. He highlights that alert and warning means:

- Alerting the public
- Notifying them of an impending threat
- Specifying directions to mitigate threat
- Coordinate notifications of active situations in the city

The Duty Officer is the primary point of contact for disasters. First responders are the first line of defense. Duty officers are responsible for acquiring additional resources into the city and for making active emergency management decisions. When asked which was most important amongst the 4 corners of emergency management, i.e. mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery - he said that all 4 were equally important and related. While duty officer are typically retired firefighters or police officers, in the SF office they are a mix of personnel with varied backgrounds.

Business Preparedness

Carmela Hinderaker, Director of Business Continuity for C&S Wholesale Grocers and stationed in Keane,NH monitors any threats, natural or man-made, that may affect the supply chain of both the customers and vendors. This means that she must closely monitor large-scale disruptions such as hazardous weather conditions, infectious disease trends and possible civic disruptions that would impede, delay or prevent perishable and non-perishable but essential items from reaching thousands of households across the country. Interestingly, before a hurricane for instance, water and ice are in high demand. Post hurricane, cleaning supplies are typically sought. Her role is a blend of logistics and planning and also encompasses following safety guidelines for both the products and the drivers and working across departments creating planning exercises and coordinating responses.

Community Preparedness 911

In the interview, Prof. Gershon said that people typically waited 6 minutes to make their way out of the building after the buildings in the 911 incident were impacted. She claimed the evacuation was successful as most people, below the crash, made it out below the crash in the North Tower. However, the PA system was down and most people lacked emergency preparedness. "Some didn't even know there were three different sets of stairs." People, in a very normal response, may freeze up and enter a state of denial when confronted with such an extreme disruption to their day to day lives. Gershon states that an *emergent norm* occurs when someone steps up to lead others who perhaps may have had previous training. Miller was there in the '93 bombing and had some previous knowledge, which was helpful in aiding him to help others, however that experience was far different and he thought there was more time. People naturally assume that people will behave "badly" in a crisis situation. It was not that case in 911. People were friendly and kind in the stairwells. Additionally, finding someone who may know what to do increases survival rather than wasting time trying to figure it out alone. After 911, fire code changes were helpful in training people (fire safety directors and occupants of high rises) to prepare and respond. Most importantly, the greatest allies are also the people around you. They are the first responders.

Discussion

What was interesting about and common about all three modes of preparedness was the aspect of adaptability that is essential in preparedness. In the SF/ EOC, utilizing staff with different backgrounds enabled different points of view. In Hinderaker's case the creation of her role as Director of Business Continuity effectively enables the grocery supply industry to have more resiliency and obviously be better prepared. In the 911 interview, the ability to step into a role of leadership was found essential to preparedness. In all three, as well, there were people who had some previous experience if not a great amount and this is absolutely necessary to preparedness in any situation or realm.