



A Selective History of Emergency Management

Presentation by the National Emergency Management Association





Baseline Truths

- **Emergency management almost has no natural constituency base until an emergency or disaster occurs.** Except for those persons and agencies with responsibilities in emergency management, which are modest in number and influence, **the function has no generally attentive, supportive set of constituents or clients,** which is so important to the survival and effectiveness of public agencies.
- **Emergency management agencies are generally under funded for planning, training and exercises even though these activities are every bit as essential for their effectiveness as they are for military organizations.**
- **Source: "Coping With Catastrophe. Building an Emergency Management System to Meet People's Needs in Natural & Manmade Disasters" 1993**



Varied Ad Hoc Origins

- 1666** -- Great London Fires -- 2/3 of city destroyed
 - First mitigation measures: building codes & fire insurance
- 1803** -- Congressional support following fires in New Hampshire
- 1889** -- Johnstown (PA) Flood -- 2,200 fatalities
- 1900** -- Galveston Hurricane -- 12,000 fatalities
- 1906** -- San Francisco Earthquake
- 1916** -- Council of National Defense
 - 6 Cabinet Members
 - Unpaid Civilian Advisory Committee
 - Congressional Funding Ended in 1920
 - Overshadowed by War Industries Board
 - Focused on mobilization of civilian resources -- encouraged states to create state defense councils
- 1941** -- Office of Civil Defense within Office of Emergency Planning
 - 44 State and 1,000 local defense councils



Post World War II

- Varied assessments following WWII
- “Blue Book”
 - “the operational responsibility of civil defense would rest with state and local governments and the federal government would assist in ways it believed to be appropriate.”
- Congress recommends creating a federal civil defense administration reporting directly to the President.
- 1949 Federal Civil Defense Administration established -- threat from USSR key catalyst.



The 1950s

- FCDA to monitor emergencies and disasters but no assistance to state or local governments provided.
- January 1951 FCDA made an independent agency; absorbed functions of National Security Resources Board (NSRB), whose role was to “advise the president on mobilization, specifically the buildup of industrial capabilities and stockpiling of “critical” national security materiel.
- September 1950 Congress approved the Federal Disaster Relief Act to provide limited assistance during disasters.
- Office of Defense Mobilization assigned disaster relief responsibilities until 1973.
- Defense Production Administration (DPA) created in 1950 to exercise general control of defense production.



Fundamental Policy Issue

- Distinction between wartime civil defense initiatives and natural disaster relief efforts unclear.
- Civil defense workers had “national security” status and dealt with critical production issues and “protection” of civil population from foreign attack.
- Disaster relief seen by Civil Defense as an unrelated, benign task.



1958-1973

- Office of Defense and Civil Mobilization created -- in EOP.
- Federal Civil Defense Act amended to allow the federal government to provide funding for civil emergency preparedness -- 50/50 matching funds for personnel and administrative costs for agencies engaged in civil defense preparedness.
- 1961 JFK separated “civil defense” and other emergency preparedness functions into 2 agencies
 - Office of Civil Defense -- Department of Defense. Engineering studies of shelters; stockpiling.
 - Office of Emergency Planning -- responsible for all civilian preparedness activities -- resources, disaster relief, COG. (Became Office of Emergency Preparedness in 1968).
- 1971 Dual use of CD funding allowed. OEP now named Defense Civil Preparedness Agency. Federal funds could be used for natural disaster planning.



1973-1992

Reorganization Plan #2

- All coordination of federal disaster response assigned to GSA which created several divisions to carry out functions.
- Federal Disaster Relief assigned to HUD -- Federal Disaster Assistance Administration.
- Federal Insurance Administration also in HUD -- created in 1968 to provide flood, riot and crime insurance.
- DoD retained DCPA
- **1979 -- FEMA established.** Dozens of disparate agencies. Distinction between "civil defense" /national security" planners and others who assisted state and local governments in preparing for and responding to natural and environmental disasters.
- 1988 -- Stafford Act (amended Disaster Relief Act of 1974)
- Evolution of concept of "Comprehensive Emergency Management" -- Mt. St. Helen's, Bophal, Hurricane Hugo, Loma Prieta earthquake, Hurricane Andrew.



National Academy of Public Administration Report -- 1993

- “Emergency management and FEMA are overseen by too many congressional committees, none of which has either the interest [in] or a comprehensive overview of the topic to assure that coherent federal policy is developed and implemented.”
- FEMA needs “a more coherent legislative charter, greater funding flexibility, and sustained support for building an effective agency and a national emergency management system.”



1993 GAO Report

- To “underscore the commitment of the President, responsibility for catastrophic disaster preparedness and response should be placed with a key official in the White House.”
- FEMA Directorates whose resources would form a disaster response unit -- National Preparedness and State and Local Programs and Support have “not historically worked well together.”

1993-2000



- FEMA Reorganization -- Mitigation Directorate, Preparedness, Training and Exercises Directorate, Response & Recovery Directorate.
- FEMA Director made member of Cabinet
- 1993 -- EMAC Initiative by Southern Governors begun
- 1993 -- World Trade Center Bombing
- 1995 -- Oklahoma City Bombing
- 1997 -- Nunn/Lugar/Domenici Initiative
- 1999 -- ODP in Department of Justice

2000-2007



- 9/11/01 Terrorist Attacks
- Creation of Office of Homeland Security in White House
- March 2003 Creation of Department of Homeland Security
 - ODP Function kept separate from FEMA
- 2004 Hurricane Season -- perception of FEMA's effectiveness
- 2004-2005 DHS undertakes 2SR (2nd Stage Review) resulting in major reorganization, including creation of Preparedness Directorate separate from FEMA
- August 2005 -- Hurricane Katrina
- September 2006 -- FEMA Reform Act
- January 2007 -- DHS announces plans for implementing FEMA Reform Act