Shifting Gears: The Changing Nature of Emergency Preparedness in the Modern Industrial Society

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What has changed?

• Emergency preparedness and business continuity planning have long been a feature of how organizations manage risk.

• What is new is the growing recognition of the implications of larger-scale emergencies, where range, degree or relief time call for “disaster-resilience” (though these must be seen in perspective, reinforcing preparedness for more typical situations).
Potential Impacts

• Loss of services:
  – power
  – communications
  – transport
  – food and shelter
  – fuel
  – medical
  – supplies
  – expert help
  – public order
  – information
Some examples

• 1998 ice storm, 2003 power failure
  fuel for generators and transport, groceries, communications, cash

• 9-11 response, security threats
  air travel grounded, border closed

• SARS, flu pandemic
  quarantine, severe restrictions on personnel in affected area, use of paraprofessionals

• Katrina/Rita
  worst case scenario theory cf. practice, communications, transport/logistics, evacuation, social/medical services, family support, public order, media scares, use of military, triage/euthanasia, fuel, auto repair, credit

• Critical infrastructure
  finance needs telecom needs power needs gas needs people/skills needs …
Aspects to consider

- Scale, degree, time
- Interdependence
- Nature of response, recovery
- Islands and tokens
- Resilience
- Knowledge and relationships
- Communications
- Staff implications
- Family support
- Rules, exceptions, default
Aspects to consider (examples)

• Knowledge and relationships
  *Will key data be accessible? Who has what info and how well do they know one another? Do your people even know who to contact (org, site, position, person)?*

• Communications
  *How much depends on tel, mobile, web, computer functioning? What alternatives could be used if these are out?*

• Staff implications
  *Cross-training, availability for work, ability to override co. policy, support and control, authority, personal needs, site emergencies*

• Family support
  *$, food & water, transp, shelter/sanitation, fuel, communications, medical aid, pets, credit, identification*

• Rules, exceptions, default
  *What are the rules, how are exceptions handled, how does the system default? (Your org, plus others you depend on)*
Some useful questions

• What can you do without for a while?

• What supplies or services might you really need to provide to others?

• How could you operate, under different scenarios? (processes/equipment, skills, information, supplies)

• How well could you improvise to cover gaps if needed, yet retain sufficient control?

• What services might you need to provide to your staff to keep them working for you?

• How would your decision-system work, and how does it default?
Questions?