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?