MODELS OF EMERGENCY PLANNING:

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Introduction

In modern societies, there is increasing attention given to planning for emergencies. Emergencies, simply defined, are those events which cannot be dealt with by ordinary measures or routines. Some types of events, which occur with frequency, such as fires or accidents, do evoke the development of types of social structure within community systems to deal with such "emergencies" in a routine manner. This institutionalization of day-to-day emergencies generally has narrowed the role of emergency planning to those types of events which are periodic, rather than routine, and which are community extensive, rather than institutionally focused. The prototype for most emergency planning, then, would be such events as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, etc., which affect total community systems. While such events have a relatively low frequency, they often have the potentiality for extensive community disruption.

Emergency planning usually has focused on four interrelated phases-organized along a time continuum. The first phase, mitigation, generally refers to any activity which would eliminate or reduce the probability of occurrence of an emergency event. Such examples would be the development and implementation of building standards or land use practices which might forestall future structural damage. The next stage, generally termed preparedness, focuses on planning activities which would minimize disaster damage and which would make an emergency response more effective and efficient. Examples might be the development of monitoring systems which can be channeled into warning systems to provide emergency information on appropriate behavior to avoid injury. It also might involve the development of training emergency workers and the establishment of stockpiles of materials and equipment. In general, the activity is oriented to assisting organizations and individuals to respond to the consequences of certain disaster agents. The third stage, generally termed emergency response is designed to provide assistance for types of disaster casualties, e.g., search and rescue, emergency shelter, etc.: to reduce the possibilities of secondary damage, e.g., shutting down equipment which might produce further damage, providing security measures to inhibit access to dangerous areas; and to provide measures which would speed up recovery measures, e.g., damage assessment. The fourth stage, recovery, centers on those activities which continue beyond the emergency phase and move toward the reestablishment of the community system. Some of these activities are short-term ones, such as reestablishing vital community systems, such as utilities, transportation