



We Are Seeing Massive Changes to Risks We Face as a Society

We have had the unique privilege of working with all levels of government (local, county, state, and federal), not-for-profit, and for-profit organizations from coast-to-coast. All this exposure taught us volumes about the pulse of the field and has provided us with insight into our anticipation for top trends for 2020 and beyond.

A convergence of factors is making us more vulnerable to future disruptions:

- ◆ Our infrastructure and population are aging;
- ◆ More individuals are concentrated in risk-prone urban areas; and
- ◆ The frequency and intensity of events continues to impact more communities nationwide with no regard to existing economic conditions, preparations, and capacity to respond and recover effectively.

In Today's World

Emergency management serves as a leading force behind reducing vulnerability to hazards and enhancing the resilience of communities following disaster. This is a profound role for this profession to fill considering it was a field built from pieces of military practices, first response, and the era of civil defense. Over the past two decades, the emergency management field has undergone a great amount of growth, finally evolving into its current form with the creation of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 following September 11th, 2001 and furthered in 2005 and 2013 by the post-Hurricane Katrina reforms and the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act respectively. Our most recent examination of the field has been through the test of the 2017 and 2018 series of multi-billion-dollar disasters during which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) allocated as much funding as it had during its previous 37 years combined, and launched the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018, explicitly prioritizing mitigation and resilience-building more than ever before.



Migration to Lifelines & True Expansion to the Private Sector

Complexity of emergency coordination has become stifling; FEMA's "Community Lifelines" present a digestible way to align emergency support functions. Instead of simply sticking to isolated elements of response roles, Community Lifelines return to emergency management's core mission. Years of generous funding created systems and processes that lacked sustainability and required robust and continuous training to be implemented. The truth is that many communities (if not most) lack the resources to sustain this model and operationalize them on a limited basis in a real-world environment. FEMA has identified seven Community Lifelines to consolidate and streamline efforts that include: Safety and Security; Health and Medical; Communications; Hazardous Materials; Food, Water, Sheltering; Energy (Power & Fuel); and Transportation. This methodology provides a pathway to addressing a community's real-world needs in a timely and effective manner.

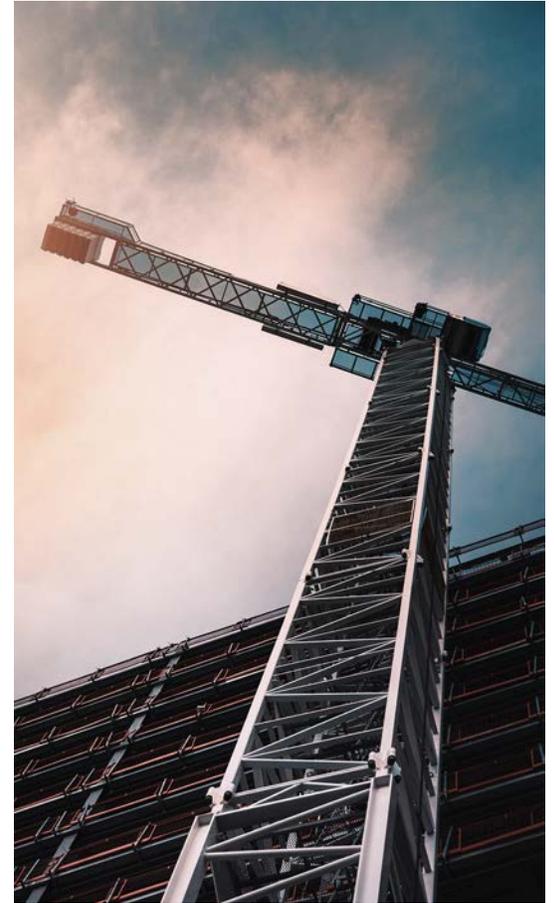
To adequately plan for and incorporate these lifelines into our efforts, we must engage and integrate operations with the private sector, not as an afterthought, but as a first line of defense. The private sector owns most of the nation's critical infrastructure. Cross-sector information sharing helps to reduce the times a survivor has to repeat the story of his/her worst day. It also provides a more accurate picture of needs and capabilities and eliminates redundancies, waste, and delays in supporting impacted communities. Establishing and prioritizing policy, processes, and mechanisms for sharing information across the public, private, and non-governmental sectors is our future and Community Lifelines are the navigational tool to get there. FEMA's current revision of ESF-14 to be inclusive of the private sector is a step in the right direction, but more is needed to increase access to funding for mitigation within public-private partnerships.



Disaster Recovery / Resilience Champions Needed

Did you know that 20 different federal government agencies implement approximately 90 different programs in a post-disaster environment? While emergency management has spent much of the past 15 years educating thousands on the Incident Command System, we often struggle to find one or two people in each community who understand even the basics of the post-disaster recovery needs assessment, coordination, and financial management. Recovery is, unequivocally, the longest and most visible part of disasters, offering the biggest opportunity for innovation, leadership, and equitable resilient practices. However, it is often overlooked in the preparedness environment. In addition, the skill set is different from the roles traditional emergency managers play - part community planner, accountant, project manager, and certainly a bit of politician thrown in. Pulled in more directions now more than ever, communities prioritizing the enhancement of consideration, preparation, and development of recovery-related skillsets is a challenge.

We must adjust to the reality of the absolute necessity for creating champions in recovery and resilience and the opportunity it presents. Unique funding streams open themselves from time to time to fund this type of work, but at the end of the day, planning for recovery and all of its important components (e.g. cost recovery, housing recovery, meaningful hazard mitigation planning) remains an unfunded suggestion rather than a funded mandate. Utilizing blue sky days, communities must prioritize, organize, and plan both pre- and post-disaster with as much enthusiasm and rigor as we've given to our understanding of the principals of the Incident Command System. This dedication is the only way communities will continue in the essential path to reach resilience. As a nation, we need to incentivize this activity and reward those who reduce the risk and exposure to future loss.



Privatization of Surge Response

As local and state governments face continued budget deficits, underfunded pensions, and competing priorities, they are required to do more with less. When a disaster hits and unprecedented demands are placed on their organization and its professionals, private sector surge staff can help to augment existing personnel, provide missing or specialized technical expertise, and arm decision-makers and executives with advisory support.

Those resource demands require specialized expertise fast; lives and the economic wellbeing of thousands (maybe more) are at risk. The public has a low tolerance for delay and response/recovery burnout is a true cascading impact of more extensive and frequent incidents. Privatization is the best option for municipalities at all levels of government; it is a tool in the toolbox for surge support.

We have seen communities use private services at scale to support the displacement of thousands following critical failure in infrastructure, and in prolonged environments to offer surges of rapidly evolving expertise requirements when recovering from a string of significant events. The value to the government and the public is obvious; following procurement processes, they can get the very best results quickly, and potentially reimbursed through federal programs. When the job is done, private entities have imparted the expertise into the community and its stakeholders but are no longer a public expense.



Prioritizing Risks Beyond the Stafford Act

Our nation is unprepared for non-Stafford Act disasters and the emergency management profession is too. We have a robust political structure that allows access to resources for those events caused by a natural disaster and declared acts of terrorism. But it's time that we rethink the approach to cyber security, active threats, infrastructure failures (intentional or unintentional), and public health crises, such as the opioid epidemic or homelessness. In our time working with local, state, federal, and nongovernmental stakeholders, we have met as many emergency managers this year whose priority is one of these non-traditional crises as those working on hurricanes, wildfires, floods, or tornados. We need to face reality; these types of events are only going to become more common in the face of the evolving risk and aging infrastructure in our communities. Non-Stafford events are no longer outliers, but have the likelihood of becoming a standard by which we are measured, and should be planned for with a matched voracity.



Engagement Strategies as a Renewed Priority

We are more connected than ever, have access to more information, and inclusion rules the day. For a time, emergency managers were able to pay tribute to the “whole community” in theory, but in practice change very little about our efforts to effectively and equitably engage with the community. But engaging the community is essential to a community's success surrounding disasters. Without meaningful engagement, there is:

- ◆ No certainty if pre-incident education and information-sharing is reaching targeted communities (e.g., if communities understand their risks and how to mitigate them);
- ◆ No understanding of the resources (people, supplies, or information) that the broader community can bring to bear during a disaster (e.g., community as agents of recovery, not just recipients); and
- ◆ Uneven or inequitable recovery processes (a post-recovery environment doesn't reflect the community's values or vision, has displaced core parts of the population/culture).

Meaningful engagement is complex and time intensive; however, communities need to develop this practice into muscle memory in pre- and post-disaster environments. Activities must include finding ways to meaningfully solicit input from—and provide information to—those in underserved communities, individuals with disabilities, rural jurisdictions, the private industry, and those left behind by the digital divide. We must effectively communicate with and solicit information from all our stakeholders to build resilience bought into by the whole community.

In 2020 & Beyond

An emergency manager will have a more essential role than in the past, and most organizations will, in part, play the role of an emergency manager. In the complex systems and processes that is modern society, the field of emergency management is in a unique position to bring together and facilitate outcomes for all types of challenging and contentious issues. That said, emergency management may look different than it has to-date. We should embrace these changes and engage with the opportunity to create a more resilient nation.