

Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Volume 4, Issue 1

2007

Article 11

Disaster Response and Recovery: Strategies and Tactics for Resilience

Daniel Barbee, UNCP

Recommended Citation:

Barbee, Daniel (2007) "Disaster Response and Recovery: Strategies and Tactics for Resilience,"
Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1, Article 11.

Available at: <http://www.bepress.com/jhsem/vol4/iss1/11>

DOI: 10.2202/1547-7355.1323

©2007 Berkeley Electronic Press. All rights reserved.

Disaster Response and Recovery: Strategies and Tactics for Resilience

Daniel Barbee

Abstract

Disaster Response and Recovery: Strategies and Tactics for Resilience by David A. McEntire, University of North Texas Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2007.

KEYWORDS: disaster recovery, strategic planning, tactical planning, resilience

Author Notes: Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of North Carolina Pembroke, Pembroke, North Carolina.

Disaster Response and Recovery: Strategies and Tactics for Resilience

David A. McEntire, University of North Texas

Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & sons, 2007, xvi + 498 pp., preface, forward, bibliography. Glossary, index, illustrations, photographs, tables.

ISBN-13 978-0-471-78974-7

ISBN-10 0-471-78974-7 (Paper)

Reviewed by:

Daniel G. Barbee, Professor

Department of Political Science and Public Administration

University of North Carolina Pembroke

Pembroke, North Carolina

This book is an excellent introduction to disaster response and recovery. It is primarily intended for emergency managers, both in-service and pre-service, but is equally useful for generalists such as city managers and for key responders such as fire and public works. The goal of the book, according to the author, is "...to integrate the lessons provided by both researchers and professionals, updating the field with current studies and guidelines" (p. vii). Moreover, the book's forward accurately asserts that it provides "...emergency managers with a readable, up to date, and scientifically sound foundation" (p. 1 of Forward).

First, regarding the design and layout, each chapter uses the CASE Learning System approach, in which the topic is addressed effectively and then moves through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In addition, the book emphasizes new information, skills, and knowledge. In each chapter, the application of new knowledge is emphasized using real-life scenarios and cases. From a teaching perspective, this is a very useful approach. When combined with the modular format used throughout the book, instructors can employ the book to meet the needs of a variety of course goals and student capabilities. Each chapter contains either within it or at the end a strong set of review, evaluative, assessment, and application materials. Again, on the matter of the format and instructional design of the book, the author has done a good job of separating process considerations, behavioral, management, organizational, and technological considerations. Moreover, through the use of the "For Example" profiles, he has promoted the case of relating each to the occurrence of disasters, effective response and recovery, and increased resilience.

A very effective job was done in creating the book's narrative and content design. The author has done a masterful job of drawing from research, documented practice, and a variety of official and conceptual guidelines. His extensive use of published research studies and cases adds to the quality of the book for both beginning and experienced professionals. In virtually all of the

chapters of the book, it is apparent that the author has sought to make a useful connection between the scholarly research on any given topic and the guidance and experiences drawn from emergency management practice. He uses the existing research in an impressive manner, tying the research contributions to the various standards, operating procedures, and practice guidelines that have emerged over the years.

From an organizing perspective, the author has done a masterful job of separating process considerations, behavioral, management, organizational, and technological considerations. Yet, through the use of the “For Example” profiles, he has promoted the case of relating each to the occurrence of disasters and effective response and recovery.

The author’s scope of coverage both in terms of major topics and subtopics within each chapter, is significant, and constitutes an impressive and well-organized sequence of chapters initially addressing hazards and disasters, the actors, and human behavior. The author’s explanation of the attributes and effects of hazards are excellent in each category: natural, technological, and civil/conflict. In these early chapters and elsewhere, he presents clearly many of the important foundation concepts in emergency management: disaster, hazard, vulnerability, and resilience, among others. Next, the author sets the stage for the process chapters by addressing briefly the traditional four phases of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. This serves as a lead-in to the primary topics of the book: response and recovery, and then resilience. The author then presents a chapter describing the actors and their typical roles in response and recovery: public, private, and non-profit sectors.

These introductory chapters on hazards and disasters, actors, and human behavior in disasters help to frame a critical series of chapters on preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation of future disasters, technology, increased vulnerability, and steps toward disaster resilience. This material, which is the critical process focus of the book, is very clear and readable. It is laid out logically, as if response and recovery issues and the associated steps in them are arranged in a sequence similar to how decision makers are likely to plan, confront, and address them.

The author has done an excellent job of presenting the essential technical language of emergency management, and the associated research and practice examples, but without overpowering less experienced readers with the complexities and details that are not essential for achieving a solid base of knowledge. For example, his use of the steps in the search and rescue process as developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency is lucid and relatively easy to learn (see p. 148). He employs the search and rescue steps later in the “You Try It” case vignettes at the end of the chapter. The use of these and many other procedural illustrations helps bring the “what” of emergency management to

life by emphasizing the “how” and the critical essentials that are involved in the effective conduct of the myriad activities that comprise response and recovery, as well as preparedness and mitigation.

The next chapters - again focused on response, recovery, vulnerability, and resilience - are at the core of the substantial value offered to the readers of this book. By portraying alternative management theories, and by suggesting the strengths and limitations of each, the author enables emergency practitioners to employ the theories effectively given varying needs and circumstances. In subsequent chapters, he explains the kinds of activities that enable effective response, from the initial period using warning and evacuation, and others, to search, rescue, and a variety of critical care traditions and elements dealing with critical incident stress and victim care generally. He skillfully offers the reader practical advice drawn from the substantial body of research on these topics.

Media, donations management, and volunteer management are treated together as the response effort begins to address issues beyond the immediacy of search, rescue, and fatalities management. Then, in turn, the materials address damage assessment, declarations, and debris removal. Assistance and mitigation are addressed, followed by an effective description of vulnerability and resilience and their practical value in emergency management. The flow of the narrative is essentially seamless. If one keeps the larger process model in mind while reading the chapters, the sequence of response and recovery actions helps provide a deeper understanding of the way things need to be done by emergency managers in our communities and in other settings.

How to identify and deal with challenges, and how to develop and use technological tools also are explained succinctly and effectively. Importantly, the author covers not only the technologies such as GIS and Decision Support Systems, but also more recent management and organizational technologies---including Incident Command System, Emergency Operations Centers, and Mutual Aid Agreements.

Dealing with increased vulnerability, and with finding ways to increase resilience are the important closing themes in the last part of the book. Especially impressive in the chapter on vulnerability is the author’s description of the evolution and increase in risk worldwide, including the effects of global warming and pandemic potential. His chapter on promoting disaster resilience not only reinforces the traditional efforts of emergency managers, but adds to their portfolios and to the array of other actors who can be recruited to join in the effort to make our communities safer and more disaster resistant.

A further critical consideration of the book yields several suggestions, primarily in the area of the resource limitations, which the author must have confronted when initially laying out the sources and design of the book. First, in terms of the excellent use the author makes of the research literature, at times the

slow emergence of research findings from various relevant disciplines, such as political science, public administration, and planning, and hence their limited contributions to emergency management practice, is reflected in the author's reliance on fewer studies on some topics than others, particularly when dealing with political, organizational, and institutional considerations. Topics such as the national incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Plan (NRP) are clearly and effectively described and explained, but virtually no research seems available to offer emergency managers concerning the usefulness or performance in practice of NIMS and NRP.

Another minor limitation relates to the minimal use of some of the key theories, concepts, and guidelines currently used in various areas of emergency management practice. Sustainability, growth management/planning, and the efforts made in many locations to integrate these considerations more directly into emergency management---particularly in recovery and post-disaster mitigation---are noticeably absent or limited in the narrative. And finally, in terms of the instructional design built into the text, even though it is an introductory text. In fact, it may have been feasible to use more studies of practice and even official after action reports (AARs) as the basis for more detailed and extended cases in which readers and students are challenged to deal with relatively complex response and recovery situations. But these are minor suggestions. On balance, the author has written a very readable and useable text, and one in which the research contributions to this field and its continuing professionalization are very effectively employed. This is an outstanding text and sets the standard for further text development in this important multidisciplinary field.