

INTRODUCTION

With the aftermath of September 11, 2001 and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, it may be tempting to suggest that emergency management has attained a new level of significance in the national consciousness. Indeed, the emergence of the profession and the creation of FEMA itself owe much to the national defense mania of the Cold War era. But, if the past is any indication, the national security concerns that periodically increase public awareness and political attentiveness to the emergency management function do not result in a broad commitment of new resources to the full array of natural and manmade disasters that threaten local communities. Aside from the increased and targeted attention focused on specific and immediate security threats, often without new resources being made available to local governments, the commitment to comprehensive disaster planning and preparedness is generally lacking. Indeed, it could even be suggested that the current national security focus holds as much potential to distract the emergency management profession as it does to increase its operational scope and effectiveness. But perhaps, if the moment is seized, the current crisis and any renewed attention it may bring to emergency management can be an opportunity to recast it as a more vital and strategic component in the future political landscape of the local communities it serves.

Important national security concerns aside, the emergency management profession is presently confronted with the challenge to manage new realities. The analysis presented herein will maintain that this requires expanding the role of the emergency management function beyond its traditional scope. It will also suggest that the emergency manager will require new skills and that the profession must be identified with the emergency manager as a proactive public actor as much as it is with institutions and technical functions. This suggests that political and organizational analysis, strategic thinking, and leadership may be increasingly important concepts of study for emergency managers. These concepts have already been applied to the analysis and implementation of virtually all other public management functions. They have refocused administrative and organizational analysis into a prescriptive subject matter with a decidedly strategic point of view (Wamsley, 1990; Moore, 1995, Lynn, 1996). Emergency management, relatively oblivious to these developments one might say, is overdue for re-articulation in terms of a more strategic public administration.

What follows is intended to outline a new conceptual framework for the emergency management profession and to suggest a basic organizational theme for its implementation. Essential to this analysis is the recognition that the limitations and inadequacies of what may be called the "old emergency management" must be overcome for the profession to advance. In discussing what may be called the "new emergency management," it will be argued that the factors that contribute to its environment and the challenges that shape it require a broader, strategic, and more proactive orientation for the emergency management profession.

THE OLD EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

An examination of emergency management literature suggests that, until quite recently, the strategic motivation for the emergency management profession arose from the challenges of responding or reacting to specific and immediate disasters rather than from the recognition of opportunities and the implementation of long term planning. It