

# Local Government Emergency Management

Subjects: Public Administration

Contributor: Christopher L. Atkinson

According to the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), emergency management is “charged with creating the framework within which communities reduce vulnerability to threats/hazards and cope with disasters” (FEMA, n.d.). Local government emergency management involves the efforts of municipalities, cities, counties, and special government entities in responding to threats/hazards and coping with emergencies.

Keywords: emergency management ; local government ; disasters ; resilience

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Hazard events, of both natural and technological origin, and disasters triggered by such events, present a variety of challenges to affected communities. A hazard may be thought of as “an extreme natural event that poses risks to human settlements” <sup>[1]</sup>, or alternatively, a threat “to people and the things they value” <sup>[2]</sup>. While a hazard event does not necessarily mean an emergency or disaster, an event that is uncontrolled can quickly lead to extensive blows to personal property and public infrastructure, adversely impacting the lives of citizens.

Local governments play a critical role in responding to hazard events and emergencies. “American emergency planning and response... begins at the local (city, town, and county) level, close to the individuals and communities most impacted... best practices include “whole of government” and “whole community” approaches, involving all parts of the government, community organizations, institutions, and businesses, with representation from diverse individual community stakeholders” <sup>[3]</sup>. In the United States case, under the National Disaster Recovery Framework, local governments have primary and initial responsibility for emergency response, as well as for collaboration, coordination, and communication; further, local governments are responsible for planning for their disaster management, and acting on behalf of their communities with regard to recovery, and advocating for community needs <sup>[4][5]</sup>. When local governments become overwhelmed, requests for assistance from higher levels (counties, states, and the Federal government) would be appropriate. The focus in this work is on local government responses to hazard events, though interaction with other levels of government is normal and typical.

Drawing on a review of emergency management, literature (Databases consulted in the search of literature include ExLibris CDI at the University of West Florida, and OneSearch at Florida Atlantic University. Keyword searches included local government; preparedness; hazard mitigation; vulnerability; resilience; stakeholder; participation; communication; business. Resources from FEMA were also consulted), this entry provides a general overview of local government emergency management, focusing on preparedness, response, and recovery. Preparedness at the local level includes planning, hazard mitigation, risk reduction and management, the importance of working with and planning for special-needs populations, community engagement, and stakeholder involvement. Concepts of vulnerability and community resilience are discussed. Disaster response is then reviewed, with regard to local governments’ relationship with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), requirements under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), aid and assistance, and expenditures; a section highlighting relationships with the local business community is included. Finally, a consideration of local government’s role in disaster recovery concludes the entry.

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## References

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