

Part 6

CRITICAL ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN DISASTER EXERCISES, PUBLIC EDUCATION, AND THE REAL THING

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MEDIA COVERAGE OF KATRINA-1

- The media swiftly deployed their **best correspondents** into harm's way to report on conditions. **Live streaming via satellite** and video phone has changed viewer's expectations of being able to witness historic events when they occur
- The media depends on **cuing** from: 1) government agencies and officials; 2) the public (via cell phones and e-mail); or, 3) from other media outlets (local affiliates, wire services, newspapers)

MEDIA COVERAGE OF KATRINA-2



- **President Bush** was criticized for not leaving his Texas ranch soon enough to convene meetings with FEMA
- **Mayor Ray Nagin** was criticized for not using school busses to help in the evacuation; for an allegedly corrupt police department; and inability to maintain control when a few snipers took pot shots at emergency responders



MEDIA IMPACTS -1

- Like it or not, emergency planners and responders are **married to the commercial media**
- **We have to work with the media to educate people:** to warn or alert them, and then to continually advise them in the wake of a disaster
- **Media coverage controls the public's perception of the severity of any event;** e.g. JDR at 1994 Northridge quake

MEDIA IMPACTS -2

- **Media coverage** is **ESSENTIAL** to the success or failure any emergency response scenario
- Media tends to search out stories that elicit **emotional responses** or **show graphic images** to spike their viewing audience
- Media market consultants recognize that **viewers tend to select one channel over all others during any important event**, often remaining loyal to that station thereafter (e.g. CNN in 1990-91 Gulf War; Fox News in 2003 Iraq invasion)

The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927



Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover



Dynamiting levee south of New Orleans

- **Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover** was sent by President Coolidge to personally oversee disaster relief and recovery
- Hoover was selected because of his **experience** supervising European relief after the First World War
- He enjoyed **favorable media coverage** which inspired public confidence. Nevertheless, many banks departed New Orleans, moving to Houston.

Operation Overlord



- **The Allied landings at Normandy in June 1944 witnessed a terrible series of systems failures**
- **General Eisenhower was able to spin positive press coverage of almost every aspect, inspiring his troops and eschewing confidence about the ultimate goals of the Allied invasion being achieved**



9/11: An example of good media management



- **New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani inspired confidence with his skillful leadership and sensitivity to the emotions evoked by the 9/11 attacks**
- **Scattered anthrax incidents almost turned the 9/11 aftermath into a national disaster of unprecedented proportions**



MEDIA REPORTS TEND TO INCLUDE “MAYBE” STATEMENTS



- Discovery of one incidence of **mad cow disease** in Yakima, WA in Dec 2003 triggers sudden decline in beef prices and sales nationwide, and bans on beef exports.
- CNN soon reported that:
*“A British Health Department bulletin revealed that fourteen Britons have died of mad cow disease so far this year; **scientists say that 500,000 people could die of the disease by 2030**”*

Headlines on hold



- The potential **Avian Flue pandemic** is on the media's radar screen right now
- Every incident is widely reported
- Western governments are developing contingency plans, similar to those developed for chemical and biological warfare scenarios.
- Public anxiety in America remains low...for the time being. One incident could change all that.

Like it or not, we have to court the media



- The television media covers the “breaking news” as never before
- Those stories can install public confidence or hinder it
- Most of the commercial media view themselves as knights in shining armor and purveyors of truthful information
- **Reality:** News networks are profit-oriented corporations operating in a highly competitive marketplace
- **Lesson:** Courting positive media coverage is becoming an essential aspect of disaster response.

About the Presenter



- Since 2001 Dr. J. David Rogers, PE, RG has held the Karl F. Hasselmann Chair in Geological Engineering at the University of Missouri-Rolla. Prior to this he taught at the University of California, Berkeley from 1994-2001.
- Dr. Rogers served on the Hurricane Katrina reconnaissance team sponsored by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Independent Levee Investigation Team funded by the National Science Foundation. He made 11 trips to New Orleans between Sept 2005 and May 2006, supervising the subsurface exploration program and historical background research on the New Orleans flood protection system.
- He has a BS in geology & geophysics from Cal Polytechnic (1976), M.S. (1979) and Ph.D. (1982) in civil engineering from U.C. Berkeley.
- He received a direct commission as a Naval Reserve intelligence officer in 1984, serving until 2002. His military tours included FICPAC, PATWINGSPAC, NAVCENTCOM, JTF-4, NAVMIC Washington DC, JICPAC, and the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey.



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