There are many types of major incidents and multiple factors regarding incidents which cannot be clearly defined or prepared for: the cause, location, scale, impact, medium and long-term implications are indeterminate. In many cases, it is the inability to plan for the specifics that causes the hazard to become a disaster in the first place. For this reason, emergency services and other authorities should build a considerable degree of flexibility into their crisis management models and the technologies they use to collaborate.

Guiding Questions

To what extend is the system's crisis management model flexible enough to support change, yet stable enough to be enacted cooperatively in different places?

To what extent and through what means (technological or otherwise) do you draw from past disasters in order to inform/update your plans or create new ones?

Further Information

A crisis management model describes an overarching and co-ordinated set of responsibilities, actions, communication processes and procedures affecting two or more agencies or organisations and aimed at the containment, management and resolution of a major incident in a controlled manner. Command and Control is the most pervasive crisis management model with the majority of the disaster risk management agencies in Europe following this model for coordinating their disaster response. However, the existence of a common model does not imply that it is the only model. Netcentric approaches that seek to 'improve the exchange of information between heterogeneous actors' exist (Boersma 2010), and the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) argues that natural or man-made crises (floods, storms, violent attacks) can be addressed better with a 'Whole Community' approach where 'officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities', and communities can play an active part in emergency planning and management. A *collaborative information management system* should support flexibility in using and combining different models.

Resources

Boersma, K., Wolbers, J., and Wagenaar, P. (2010). Organizing Emergent Safety Organizations: The travelling of the concept 'Netcentric Work in the Dutch Safety sector. *Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management Conference,* Seattle, USA, May 2010 [Link]

FEMA, A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, themes, and Pathways for Action. FDOC 104-008-1 2011, Federal Emergency Management Agency. [Link]