

**THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
AND HOMELAND SECURITY**

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COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND DISASTER
RISK MANAGEMENT VOLUME 24

**THE ROLE OF LAW
ENFORCEMENT
IN EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT AND
HOMELAND SECURITY**

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FOREWORD

LAW ENFORCEMENT: A KEY ROLE DURING DISASTERS AND CRISES

The role of law enforcement before, during, and after disasters and crises have occurred is evolving. It is in part evolving due to the expanded risk of hazards and threats.

Because of this, such organizations must see themselves as a major player in emergency management functions. Additionally, they will continue to have the first responder role given the proximity to the incident site and relationship with people in the community for which it serves. Additionally, their “readiness” is a central component to planning and response because they:

- are likely to arrive first on the scene;
- possess a well-developed communication system;
- are familiar with the local terrain and critical infrastructure;
- have a better knowledge of the local community and culture; and
- have better recognition as a visible and uniformed first responder.

Still, the role of law enforcement during distressing times goes beyond initial skillsets. They are also instrumental in:

- providing first response aid and treatment to those who may be injured or trapped;
- guiding others out of harm’s way;
- offering immediate transport out zones of danger; and
- creating resource plans for continued response and recovery.

Because of the role versatility with which law enforcement offers emergency management, adaptation becomes integral for success.

I am blessed to work for a world-renowned fire and rescue department, often regarded for its urban search and rescue capabilities. Even more impressive is the daily collaboration between law enforcement and emergency management embodying one public safety team. While I hope that other public safety agencies align as closely as we do, I can confidently say that I have never witnessed a group so dedicated to one vision.

The *Law Enforcement: A Key Role During Disasters and Crisis* will serve as a powerful desk reference for public safety leaders tasked with collaboration, communication, and cooperation in the wake of evolving disasters and crises.

Jason R. Jenkins

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Community, Environment, and Disaster Risk Management series deals with a wide range of issues relating to natural and human-induced hazards and high and emergent threats along with approaches to disaster risk reduction. As people and communities are the first and the most important responders to crises and environment-related problems, this series aims to analyze critical field-based mechanisms which link community, policy, and governance systems.

It is our sincere hope and belief that paradigmatic hazard and threat scholarship will profoundly connect law enforcement and emergency management with communities of practice, including public administrators and other first responders, in serving as force multipliers in emergency planning and disaster/crisis response.

This book has, therefore, benefited considerably from the contributions of many individuals, whom we give thanks:

Dr. Brett Bailey

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Eileen M. Decker

Max Geron

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Stephen Craig Schwartz

Jenna Tyler

Michael R. Ward

Robert Vasquez

We would also like to thank Patrick R. Baxter and C. Tyler Goodwin for both their editorial assistance and insightful introductory contributions.

We dedicate this edited volume to the good governance in law enforcement and emergency management and to all of those members who have sacrificed their lives on the front line, and to Dr. Paul L. Posner, whose life's work as a self-professed "pracademic" contributed immeasurably to all practices of good governance in our country.

Finally, this volume would not have been possible without the support of Dr. William L. Waugh, Emeritus Professor at Georgia State University and a three times chair of the American Society for Public Administration's Section on Emergency and Crisis Management.

INTRODUCTION

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT THROUGHOUT 2020

Tonya E. Thornton, Patrick R. Baxter and
C. Tyler Goodwin

Law enforcement remains a cornerstone within emergency management, serving as a vital resource in effective prevention, preservation, and response efforts. With such overlap, clearly defining both emergency management and law enforcement in this context is antecedently necessary.

Emergency management is the organization and administration of critical responsibilities and resources that serves two pain purposes:

- (1) Avoid risks to and reduce the harmful effects of hazards and threats.
- (2) Address all humanitarian aspects of emergencies, crises, and disasters.

This practical application and process orientation remains rooted in public administration that adheres to a sequence of event independent and event-driven management cycle of programmatic activities related to mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery (McEntire, 2015; Perry & Lindell, 2007). Fig. I.1 and Table I.1 clearly depict the cycle-based framework for emergency management and each associated major activity for each segment.

Law enforcement refers to organized efforts by trained government officials to enforce regulations, statutes, and codes through means of discovering, deterring, rehabilitating, or punishing violating individuals pursuant to governing rules and norms. Because of this definition, the ecosystem consists of officers, courts, and corrections. Most individuals, when referring to law enforcement, consider those on the front line – street-level bureaucrats – as police, sheriff, or federal agents.



Fig. 1.1 Emergency Management Cycle.

Table 1.1 Major Emergency Management Activities.

Event independent	1. <i>Mitigation</i> Preventing future emergencies, crises, and disasters or minimizing their effects
Event driven	2. <i>Preparedness</i> Preparing to handle an emergency, crisis, or disaster
	3. <i>Response</i> Responding safely to an emergency, crisis, or disaster
	4. <i>Recovery</i> Recovering from an emergency, crisis, or disaster

While some law enforcement parties succumb to logistical challenges inherent to emergency management, these agencies remain indispensable – connecting first responders to the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) concepts.

ICS is a standardized, hierarchical approach to the command, control, and coordination of emergency response, which provides a common structure for multiagency first responders at the local and state levels. The approach was developed in 1970 as a standalone, interagency system in the aftermath of the Southern California fires, which destroyed over 576,000 acres of land and killed 16 people, to address outstanding response challenges. Today, ICS has adopted an all-hazards approach and is utilized as a cross-jurisdictional system, in which its strategy enables information, safety, and liaison officers to adopt emergency management response tactics as part of a national platform.

To save valuable, critical time, NIMS uses a national approach. This allows for various levels of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to work together for disaster mitigation, prevention, preparation, response, and, at times, recovery. For NIMS to be successful, it must provide for single-jurisdiction/agency, single-jurisdiction with multiple agency support, and multi-jurisdictional/multiagency support; therefore, NIMS is in charge of determining who has authority in response to natural disasters. It is a communication and

information management system that is rooted in organizational behavior, focusing on the critical elements: command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance.

POSITIONING LAW ENFORCEMENT WITHIN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

In serving the public during focusing or punctuated events that are the result of emergencies, crises, and disasters, there are two roles that are typically associated with such efforts (Birkland, 1996, 2005, 2006). Emergency managers build capacities to help reduce the risk associated with hazards as well as develop measures for disaster resiliency. This role requires a multidisciplinary perspective, holistic, encompassing approach and complementary knowledge, skills, and abilities. First responders serve as an extension of emergency managers at times in assisting with activating measures to reduce the damage associated with emergencies, crises, and disasters. These professionals consist of police officers, firefighters, and medical personnel.

These professionals are uniquely positioned to competently respond to emergency incidents. These agencies do, however, struggle in two scenarios:

- (1) When a critical incident shifts into term recovery.
- (2) When long-term commitment is needed in the areas of preparedness.

Academics tribute these shortfalls to the rarity of these events, as most law enforcement responses to emergency scenarios call for a rapid and short-term action. Therefore, their tactical-first response strategies often omit best logistical planning and mid- to long-term recovery practices.

From a skillset standpoint, law enforcement officers are capable of working through any type of incident response. With that said, agencies tend to struggle in two situations:

- When a critical incident shifts into term recovery.
- When long-term commitment is needed in the areas of preparedness.

Since most police responses to critical incidents are generally rapid and short term in duration, both of the above situations can cause challenges for law enforcement personnel. With that said, the law enforcement structure uses a response template that leans toward a tactical-first approach with logistical planning and recovery often limited during a time of critical response.

THE MEANING OF HAZARDS AND THREATS

Dissecting the terminology of hazards and threats in an effort to better understand the complexity of emergency and crisis management has merit. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, the definition of a hazard is:

- (1) A source of danger.
- (2) The effect of unpredictable and unanalyzable forces in determining events.

The same dictionary also defines a threat as:

- (1) An expression of intention to inflict evil, injury, or damage.
- (2) One that threatens.
- (3) An indication of something impending.

In emergency and crisis management, the term hazard is typically categorized by two typesets. Natural hazards are those hazards rooted in the natural or built environment, in which when they intersect with human vulnerability or critical infrastructure and cause damage, destruction, or death are considered acts of God. They are also thought to not be preventable, given their association with a perceived lack of control. This differs from human-induced hazards, which are hazards that are caused by humans or are the result of human intent, negligence, error, or some sort of system failure as created by humans. There is typically an identifiable party or parties to be held accountable. And they are thought to not be predicted, albeit preventable, given their association with perceived loss of control (Neaves, Wachhaus, & Royer, 2017).

As for threats, these are seen very differently from hazards, given malicious intent or unforeseeable forces. Because of this, as related to public safety and law enforcement, there are also two primary typesets. High threats are atypical emergencies or complex attacks that include active shooters, riot violence, multisite marauding, fire as a weapon, and explosive devices, among others. Such complex attacks differ from coordinated attacks due to the lack of any indication of a long-term planning process or prior preparation. This differs from a coordinated attack, which is an attack that exhibits deliberate planning conducted by multiple hostile elements, against one or more targets from multiple locations. Additionally, a coordinated attack may involve any number of weaponry systems and requires the indication of insurgent continuing planning. Then, there are emergent threats, those threats can mean many things, from biodefense to cybersecurity and domestic terrorism to viral pandemics. In keeping with the theme of emergency and crisis management, emergent threats, also referred to as emerging threats, are related to developing and strengthening capacities to prevent, detect, and control both infectious diseases and national extremism (Neaves, Rand, Delaney, & Smith, 2017).

A YEAR OF CRISES IN 2020

Twenty-twenty was a year of perpetual crises, of which have continued well into 2021. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA),

the U.S. experienced a record-smashing 22 weather and climate disasters ... [in which] [d]amages from these disasters exceeded \$1 billion each and totaled approximately \$95 billion for all 22 events. (2021)

Still, there were other crisis events that added additional strain and strife to an already suffering country, including a viral pandemic, economic collapse, and civil unrest (Milligan, 2021). This confluence of crises presented intensified challenges for many in the law enforcement and emergency management fields, in hopes of garnering lessons learned and promising news for continuity of planning and response operations.

Natural Hazards

Extreme weather. Atmospheric storms can manifest in a variety of ways. To be considered extreme events, the storms are typically severe, overwhelming, unexpected and/or unseasonal, especially when compared to past weather patterns in the same area. These manifestations often consist of:

- *Hurricanes* – large low-pressure centers with circling thunderstorms that produce high winds and heavy rain;
- *Thunderstorms* – storms characterized by atmospheric imbalance and turbulence;
- *Tornadoes* – violent, rapidly rotating funnels of air; and
- *Severe winter storms* – storms characterized by dominant varieties of precipitation that form at very cold temperatures.

When they interact with more hydrologic systems, they can also result in:

- *Floods* – overflow of expansive waters that submerges land; and
- *Storm surges* – offshore massive rises of water pushed inland by high winds.

Therefore, these hazards can compound and/or cascade, triggering a number a series of disastrous events.

In 2020,

Theta – the 29th named storm of the Atlantic season – [broke] the record for the highest number of tropical/subtropical storms in a single year. The previous record of 28 storms was set in 2005. [With] [o]fficial records [dating back] to 1851. Nov 10, 2020. (Thompson, 2020)

An unprecedented season, indeed, bringing about a record toll of “fatalities, economic losses, and paralyzing damages” (Masters, 2020).

Human-induced Hazards

Rampant wildfires. Wildfires are uncontrolled fires in combustible vegetation that occur in the countryside or a wilderness area. As much as 90% of wildfires are caused by people.

Some human-caused fires result from campfires left unattended, the burning of debris, downed power lines, negligently discarded cigarettes and intentional acts of arson. The remaining 10 percent are started by lightning or lava. (Insurance Information Institute, 2020)

There are other natural forces that can exacerbate wildfire conditions. Such elements include:

- *Droughts* – extended times when a region notes a deficiency in rainfall or water supply; and
- *Heat waves* – prolonged periods of excessively hot weather often accompanied by high humidity.

According to the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, “[t]he 2020 season was a record-setting one for the state of California and the United States as a whole.” Additionally, the National Interagency Fire Center “reported that as of Nov. 27 there were 52,113 wildfires that had burned 8,889,297 acres in 2020” (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2020). Most of these fires overwhelmed the response capabilities of California, Oregon, and Washington (Migliozi, Reinhard, Popovich, Wallace, & McCann, 2020).

High Threats

The United States has experienced a heightened risk of high threats in the past few decades. More recently, the country experienced political violence and instability throughout the 2020 Presidential campaign and election period, with more likely to occur. Mass shootings hit an all-time record high in 2019, just before the onset of the international pandemic, which caused K-12 schools to shut down the following year and then return mostly in a virtual environment. Still, 2020 experienced a high volume of K-12 shootings, even if classroom experience was limited or virtual (Statista, 2020).

Violent hate crimes were also rising during this period. First, “police killings continue unabated, at 2.5 times the rate for Black men as for white men.” Tolerance for structural racism and police violence came to a breaking point during the summer months of 2020 after George Floyd, a black man, was arrested. Floyd’s arresting officer pinned him down and kneeled on his neck, subsequently killing him after being arrested for a \$20 counterfeit bill. Black Lives Matter protests emerged in hours after the video of Floyd’s murder went viral; ACLED catalogued over 10,000 demonstrations that took place in all 50 states and in Washington, DC. A small percentage of these protests, less than 7%, turned violent (Reuters, 2020). Then, attacks against Asian Americans increased due to China having been blamed for “releasing” the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. Finally, on Christmas morning of 2020, a bomb inside an RV that was parked in downtown Nashville exploded. The blast shattered windows, caused fires, floods, and temporarily “disrupted cell phone and internet services.” Law enforcement had received a tip notifying of a bomb inside the RV but were unable to reach the location in time to stop the bomb from detonating. Fortunately, police officers were able to evacuate the scene of the bomb and saved lives by ensuring no one was around during the explosion (Rojas, Goldman, & Cavendish, 2020).

Emergent Threats

Throughout 2020, the United States experienced other emergent threats, rising nationalism and a pandemic. “White nationalist hate groups in the US have

increased 55% throughout the Trump era,” according to a new report by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), and a “surging” racist movement continues to be driven by “a deep fear of demographic change” (Wilson, 2020). It has been positioned that many of these individuals fear of losing social and political dominance – that they will lose their place in society, where place means everything, spatially, temporally, and financially. Such belief systems led to a series of white supremacy activities rooted in conspiracy theory that spiraled out of control culminating with an assault on the US Capitol in early January 2021.

Still, as all of this was unfolding, the United States, and the world, continued to suffer from a deadly and disruptive pandemic, COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2). This virus is a highly contagious disease that debilitates the respiratory systems, causing a severe acute syndrome. It was first recorded in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Since that time, it has spread to all countries worldwide. According to the [World Health Organization \(WHO, 2020\)](#),

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating: tens of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty, while the number of undernourished people, currently estimated at nearly 690 million, could increase by up to 132 million by the end of the year.

As of February 12, 2021, global cases are nearing 110 million, with 2.3 million deaths. In the United States alone, the caseload is approaching 30 million with more than 475,000 deaths ([Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, 2021](#)). Thankfully, there is light at the end of the tunnel, with several lifesaving vaccinations having been developed; still, there have been many challenges to its distribution and administration.

A PARADIGMATIC SHIFT

As seen, there have been many hazards and threats that the United States has experienced in the past decade, particularly the last year, which call for detailed attention to the role of law enforcement in emergency management. In a good governance society, these two communities of practice are fundamental to action-oriented decision-making in times of disaster and crisis. Combined intelligence is a key public safety concept predicated on shared experience and is essential to the problem-solving process. This is important to note given that the academic field and professional practice of emergency management is still fairly young, struggles with a civil defense orientation, and has historically been inundated with a military or paramilitary prescription.

Decision-making models, as depicted by Thornton’s 4C’s model, have highlighted a need for collaborative partnerships. Increased communication, along with enhanced coordination and strengthened cooperation, should be recognized as important and viewed as a relevant means to ideological bridge building that aims to strengthen social cohesion and political confidence so that a more

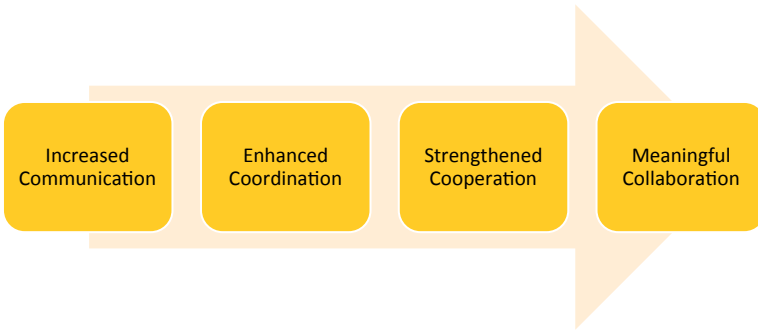


Fig. I.2 Thornton’s 4C’s Model.

Integrated Approach to Planning and Response Operations

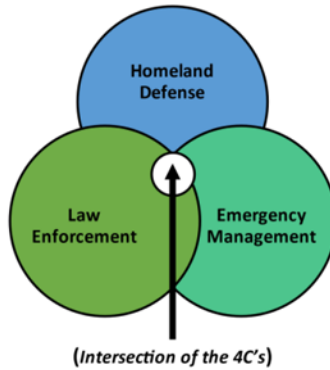


Fig. I.3 Public Safety Perspective.

integrated approach to community resiliency can be developed Fig. I.2 directionally outlines the 4C’s.

To this end, local authorities – that is, first responders, namely law enforcement – are becoming force multipliers in information sharing toward addressing hazards and threats. An innovative framework for instituting a public safety-oriented platform of research, training, and practice that integrates law enforcement, emergency management, and homeland defense to more efficiently and effectively plan for and respond to an evolving scenario of disasters and crisis should be developed, which cultivates intra- and interagency relationships. Fig. I.3 depicts where the 4C’s should overlap between various public safety organizations.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS EDITED VOLUME

This book examines the role and involvement of law enforcement agencies across the spectrum of emergency management, to include the structures and