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When There Is No Cavalry

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Reprint

No single authority can prepare for or respond to major disasters as effectively as a megacommunity can.

When There Is
No Cavalry

by Douglas Himberger, David Sulek, and Stephen Krill Jr.

Illustration by Marco Ventura

When Hurricane Andrew slammed into the Florida coast in August 1992, its 165 mph winds carved a swath of destruction across southern Dade County, littering the landscape with splintered trees, overturned cars, and debris from flattened businesses and homes. This Category 5 hurricane quickly overwhelmed local relief efforts. As with most severe natural disasters, it prompted pleas from community leaders for federal assistance. But there were limits to what the federal authorities could do. After three days, Dade County Emergency Management Director Kate Hale lashed out on national television. "Where in the hell is the cavalry on this one?" she demanded. "They keep saying we're going to get supplies. For God's sake, where are they?"

If there was a cavalry to call, like the horseback rescue squad in the archetypal Western movie, then it either never arrived or arrived too late to do much good. Ultimately, Andrew destroyed 126,000 homes, left 250,000 people homeless, wiped out 80 percent of the area's farms, and was responsible for at least 40 deaths. The hurricane also caused more than US$26 billion in damage, including $16 billion in insured losses — too much for insurance companies to cover. According to one report, 11 insurance companies went bankrupt trying to cover more than 600,000 claims.

"Florida learned a hard lesson about response and recovery after Andrew," said Jeb Bush, who was the state's governor from 1999 to 2007, in testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security on October 19, 2005. "That catastrophic storm was a wake-up call for all Floridians."

Specifically, it was now clear to Florida's leaders that

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no government agency could manage this type of large-scale catastrophe on its own. Each of the various local, state, and federal agencies tasked with emergency management had only part of the resources or knowledge needed to address a wide-ranging disaster — a disaster that might affect businesses, transportation nodes, utility infrastructures, water and food supplies, law enforcement, hospitals and medical services, communications networks, and other crucial services. So Florida moved to a new approach, deliberately involving a variety of organizations — public sector, corporations, nongovernmental (NGOs), and faith-based — in its emergency planning and activities.

This meant changing both the planning process and the relationships among these various groups. State officials took a hard look at construction practices and regulations, enforcing current codes and drafting new legislation and regulations to ensure that buildings could withstand strong winds. (A report by the Institute for Business and Home Safety said the new codes, had they been in place in 1992, would have reduced Andrew's damage by $10 billion, or more than one-third of the total.) To address the insurance problems exposed by Hurricane Andrew, Florida created the Florida Residential Property and Casualty Joint Underwriting Association and the Florida Windstorm Underwriting Association — insurance pools for homeowners who live in hurricane-prone areas. (In 2002, these associations were combined into the Citizens Property Insurance Corporation.) The state also created the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund to provide reinsurance to help the insurance industry cover its policies following any particularly costly disaster. Finally, the state helped sponsor the Volunteer Florida Foundation, a community-based program that serves as a focal point for private, charitable, and individual donations and volunteer activities related to disaster recovery.
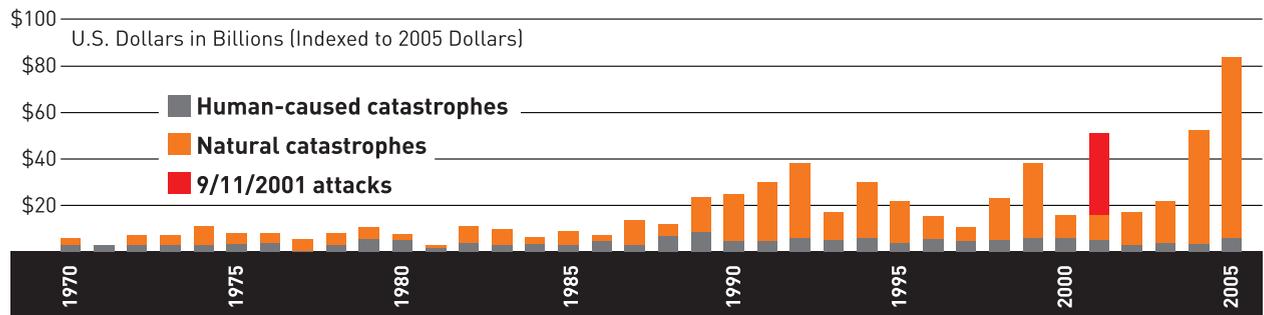
The success of this approach soon became obvious. During the severe 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, a series of high-powered hurricanes and tropical storms (Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, Jeanne, Dennis, Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, and Tropical Storms Bonnie, Ophelia, and Tammy) struck Florida. The state's government, business, and civil organizations quickly mobilized, working together — as they had planned and trained to do — to provide aid for relief and recovery. At the same time, the strengthened building codes limited the damage to businesses and homes. Following the 2004 hurricane season, insurance companies received more than $3.6 billion from the catastrophe fund, cushioning the impact of claims they paid for storm damages. (In subsequent years, responding in part to Florida's increasing property insurance rates, the state further expanded the fund's role.) Florida still requested federal assistance during these crises, reinforcing the federal government's critical role in assisting during response and recovery. But the federal government was just one of many members of an integrated "megacommunity," one in which each player had its own particular role and purpose. Consequently, when hurricanes threaten Florida today, its residents no longer expect or require the federal "cavalry" to gallop in and save the day.

Successes and Failures

Florida's experience offers important lessons for anyone responsible for managing the response to an emergency. Many leaders understand that their success depends on

Exhibit 1: **The Rising Costs and Scale of Catastrophe**

Worldwide insurance losses from catastrophes between 1970 and 2005, including property and business-interruption damages. Insurance companies are more motivated than ever to find megacommunity-oriented and multilateral solutions to the emergency preparedness problem.

U.S. Dollars in Billions (Indexed to 2005 Dollars)

- ■ Human-caused catastrophes
- ■ Natural catastrophes
- ■ 9/11/2001 attacks

Source: University of Pennsylvania Wharton Risk Center, with data from Swiss Re and Insurance Information Institute. Reprinted with permission.

their ability to work with a multitude of government, business, and civil-sector organizations that have shared interests. (The civil sector includes charities and humanitarian groups, civil associations, religious organizations, academia, and other NGOs.) This need for multisector involvement is especially great today, because many disaster scenarios — such as a volatile hurricane season, a pandemic influenza, a large earthquake, or a terrorist strike — hold the potential to produce catastrophic, cascading impacts that tax the social, economic, and political resources of a region. (See Exhibit 1.) The most effective way to manage this is by creating partnerships and alliances across organizations, without compromising each organization's imperatives and legal responsibilities. This type of in-depth, long-term alliance has been dubbed a megacommunity. (See "The Megacommunity Manifesto," by Mark Gerencser, Fernando Napolitano, and Reginald Van Lee, *s+b*, Summer 2006.)

A megacommunity is a public sphere in which organizations — public, private, and civil — join together to address a compelling issue of mutual importance. Leaders are attracted to megacommunities because they recognize that many modern challenges — such as protecting the environment, stopping the spread of infectious disease, or battling global warming — are so complex and far-reaching in their geographic impact that no single organization or even nation can adequately address them unilaterally. Many local-scale problems, such as water conservation, traffic congestion, or economic revitalization, also defy remedy by a single government agency or large corporation. Thus, government agencies, in particular, are beginning to turn to the megacommunity approach — designing, convening, and supporting consortia of shared-interest organiza-

tions. Although organizations within a particular megacommunity may compete in other spheres, they act together in a sustained partnership to address a complex problem that none can solve on its own.

If Florida's experience has served to underscore the effectiveness of the megacommunity, then the Gulf Coast's 2005 experience with Hurricane Katrina vividly illustrates the devastation and misery that can occur in its absence. In the aftermath of the floods and evacuation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and various local and state authorities were all blamed for their lack of preparation and dismal response to the unfolding disaster. FEMA was singled out by some critics as the primary culprit.

But FEMA did not fail, nor did individual state or local agencies. It was the megacommunity that failed, or — more accurately — failed to exist. The preparedness stakeholders, though interdependent, were not ready to respond in concert to the disaster. Because they had not rehearsed or prepared together, they could not act effectively as individual organizations.

Since Katrina, FEMA has set for itself the admirable goal of becoming a world-class emergency management organization. But the agency can unlock its full potential only by embracing and nurturing the preparedness megacommunity on which it depends. Some underreported successes in Katrina point to the possibilities. For example, Florida played an integral role in supporting southern Mississippi and Louisiana. Within hours of the storm's landfall, Florida began deploying more than 3,700 first responders to the affected areas. Florida also contributed millions of dollars that were eventually reimbursed to the state through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

A Bottom-Up Strategy for Catastrophic Events

by Governor Jeb Bush, Florida, and Deirdre Finn

Florida is a natural paradise that is home to more than 17 million people and plays host to millions of visitors from around the world every year. However, the very characteristics that make our state a great place to live and visit — its tropical climate and geography — also make us vulnerable to extreme and catastrophic natural disasters, from floods and hurricanes to droughts and wildfires.

Because of this, the ability to respond quickly and compassionately to emergencies, such as natural disasters, is essential to our quality of life and our long-term economic vitality. Floridians and tourists alike need to feel confident that their communities and state are prepared for both response and recovery. Without that sense of security, visitors will choose other vacation destinations, and businesses will invest in calmer, if colder, climates.

Preparing for a catastrophic event is the key to a rapid, effective response. A successful response in the immediate aftermath of a disaster is the linchpin in a sound, long-term recovery. So although we can't control the weather, we can manage and mitigate the impact of dangerous weather throughout our state.

As we learned from eight hurricanes during two consecutive hurricane seasons, our response can always get better. To improve our capabilities, Florida invests time and money in the tools and training that are necessary to achieve the level of readiness that saves lives and minimizes damage from catastrophic events. For example:

• We are one of the few states in the nation to have an interoperable, statewide radio network in place that allows law enforcement officers and emergency responders with different information technology and systems to communicate to coordinate response during and immediately after an event.

• We are mapping our entire coastline, using the latest technology, to determine storm surge patterns that will provide the scientific data to support updated evacuation plans. Getting people out of harm's way is the priority, but knowing who doesn't need to evacuate to higher ground can also save lives by reducing crowding on roadways.

• We are expanding our capacity to shelter evacuees. And we are installing permanent power generators in special shelters that care for the frail, sick, and elderly — the most vulnerable among us, whose lives are threatened when the power goes out.

• We have one of the strongest building codes in the U.S., but we continue to strengthen it to protect people and reduce the loss of property. Strong building codes also allow more and more people to weather storms in their own homes, reducing the risk of disaster and the cost of recovery.

Just as all politics is local, so are all disasters. The most effective response is one that starts at the local level and grows with the support of surrounding communities, state agencies, and, if necessary, the federal government. The bottom-up approach yields the best and quickest results — saving lives, protecting property, and getting life back to normal as rapidly as possible.

Our approach also recognizes that government alone cannot effectively respond to a disaster, nor can government afford to maintain a full-time cavalry of emergency response workers capable of managing a wide range of potential catastrophic events. Florida has fewer than 200 full-time emergency responders on staff, but when disaster strikes, thousands of state workers don their emergency management hats and play a role in the response. Likewise, the state coordinates and collaborates with multiple partners outside government, including businesses, trade associations, and charitable organizations, to provide a swift humanitarian response.

Florida also places a premium on individual preparedness. No country or community in the world can effectively respond to a disaster if its citizens are unprepared to cope with crisis when disaster strikes. Just as government needs to prepare and practice for emergencies, so do families and businesses.

To help citizens prepare, Florida

Core Elements

The megacommunity is a relatively recent phenomenon. It is made possible by the increasing complexity, interdependence, and technological sophistication of modern society. A megacommunity takes advantage of the pervasive information technologies (such as shared servers, satellite phones, and geographic information systems) that enable people and organizations to communicate easily across national and organizational boundaries, sharing information and collaborating in

declared an annual sales tax holiday, a weeklong period when we waive state sales tax on purchases of items such as flashlights, radios, and generators that help residents get ready for hurricane season. Knowing the evacuation route to escape the imminent danger and having enough food, water, and other vital supplies to survive independently for the first 72 hours after the disaster are only the first steps.

Substandard housing remains a significant vulnerability in our ability to respond to and recover from a hurricane. A home that loses part of its roof can be completely destroyed by the rain and mold that follow — adding significant time and money to rebuilding. In large-scale catastrophes, hundreds of thousands of families could be forced from their homes for long periods while their homes are repaired.

According to the Shimberg Center for Affordable Housing, nearly 4 million of the 4.4 million single-family homes in Florida were built before the uniform statewide building code was adopted in 2002. And the overwhelming majority of these, nearly 3.2 million, were built before 1995, when the code was significantly strengthened after the devastation caused by Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

The risk of damage associated with homes built before the current building code was implemented has caused insurance premiums to sky-rocket. Although efforts to address the issue have provided much-needed relief to homeowners, a catastrophic hurricane or multiple storms such as those we have experienced in recent years could bankrupt private insurers or drive them out of the market.

The long-term answer is to fortify Florida against the damage caused by hurricanes. The state has aggressively pursued a strategy to align the financial interests of all those involved — insurers, contractors, members of the retail sector — to expand the scope of, and add velocity to, our mitigation efforts.

Just last year, we launched a $250 million preparedness investment program — the first of its kind in the nation — to protect residential property from the damage that can be caused by hurricanes. Under the My Safe Florida Home program, the state matches homeowners' investments, dollar for dollar, up to $5,000, in approved damage-mitigation projects, such as window and door shuttering, on their home. Additionally, insurers are required to give discounts on policy premiums for homes with approved measures.

In the ultimate "culture of preparedness," all Floridians would have a personal plan to recover from disasters. Homeowners need to harden their houses with shutters and stronger roofs to prevent damage that could force them out of their homes for long periods. All property owners need to secure adequate insurance to cover damage from wind, rain, and flooding. Business owners need to have a plan to reopen and, if necessary, relocate their businesses.

Preparedness saves lives and taxpayer money. When individuals take responsibility for their safety and well-being during and after a catastrophe, government can focus resources on the most vulnerable and hardest hit.

Florida is already a model of emergency management for the nation. Yet we can always do better. We need to continue to sharpen our skills, enhance our capabilities, and practice, practice, practice to ensure that we remain prepared to respond to and recover from whatever emergency lies over the horizon.

Jeb Bush

(jeb@jeb.org) served two terms as governor of the State of Florida, from 1999 to 2007. During his eight years in office, he cut taxes by $20 billion, reduced the size of government by 10 percent, and reformed many programs, including public education and Medicaid.

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ways not possible just 10 or 15 years ago.

In Booz Allen Hamilton's ongoing study and analysis of megacommunities, it is becoming clear that five core elements are crucial to effective outcomes:

1. Three-Sector Involvement. The public, private, and civil sectors must all be involved.

2. Overlapping Vital Interests. Members share a compelling reason or need to address an issue of mutual concern and importance.

3. Alliance. Members demonstrate their commit-

The View from Below Sea Level

by Sybe Schaap

Much of the Netherlands is below sea level. Flood survival is a great concern. We have learned that, to survive, we need a governance system with balance. It can be neither too centralized nor too decentralized; it must be led by the government, but it must be run in partnership with the private and civil sectors.

We learned much of this in 1953, in the aftermath of the worst flooding in modern Dutch history. At that time, there were more than 2,500 water authorities in the Netherlands. Created by local landlords, farmers, and churches, these village water boards dated back to the Middle Ages, and were probably the first elected democracies in Europe. Some were more than 1,000 years old. They had built the earliest Dutch windmills, which were used to pump water out of the lowlands; they had also built drainage ditches, canals, and the earliest Dutch dikes for stopping floods.

Then, during a storm that reached our shores on January 31, 1953, and lasted for several days, the sea broke through 89 dikes. More than 1,830 people died, in many cases after being trapped by water inside their houses; 72,000 people were evacuated. We realized that year that to change our water technologies, we would have to change our water management approach. So we consolidated into 26 local "water authorities." They are completely independent of other government agencies: They have their own taxes (so that their funding cannot be diverted or politicized) and are responsible only for water, sewage treatment, and flood protection. All the water authorities remain democracies, with officials elected by residents in their jurisdiction.

There is a national authority as well, the Rijkswaterstaat, which prescribes overall standards — how high and strong levees must be, how pure water must be to earn a designation of "purified," and so on. This authority dates back to Napoleon's invasion in the 1790s. But centralized control by itself cannot guarantee preparedness for floods and other natural disasters, because each region is different. Each area has its own soil types, mix of rural and urban neighborhoods, and favored approaches. If we had a cen-

tralized system, the national authority would have to manage on-the-ground protection in faraway localities, and that would be much too impractical.

We also include nongovernmental organizations in our preparedness infrastructure. These include not-for-profit institutes that conduct research on water safety and flood prevention, environmental groups, farmers' unions, contractors who build and maintain dikes and levees, and companies that pay fees to send their waste through the systems.

All of these groups typically have seats on the water boards. The boards, in short, are not just governing authorities — they are conveners of conversation and mutual planning. The more candid, pragmatic, and inclusive the planning conversations, the more effective our protection against the incursion of sea or river.

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ment by establishing an organization or organizing framework for working together toward shared goals.

4. Network Structure. Cross-boundary, collective participation and problem-solving activities create the social network that underpins true collaboration.

5. Sustainability and Adaptability. Over time, the megacommunity becomes institutionalized and capable of evolving with changing conditions.

The first two elements are preconditions necessary for the formation of a megacommunity, whereas the last three are features of any initiative that is deliberately created to sustain a megacommunity. Typically, an "initiator" starts the process of organizing the megacommunity. In Florida, the state government largely played that

role. But it is important to note that the initiator is not a chief executive who can command megacommunity resources or unilaterally direct its member organizations. Consequently, the megacommunity is horizontal rather than vertical or hierarchical, acting more as a confederation than as a tightly bound organizational unit. In addition, a megacommunity engages people at all levels among the member organizations. The cross-organizational design makes the emergent social networks within the community more explicit and dynamic. Successful leaders within the megacommunity are those who understand how to intervene and influence others through mutual participation, recognizing that no one has unilateral control.

Following the 2004 tsunami in South Asia, Coca-Cola quickly carried out a plan for using the production lines of local subsidiaries to bottle drinking water for the relief effort.

In building a society's preparedness for disasters, megacommunities have a particularly valuable role to play. At one time, a disaster's impact rarely extended outside the region where it occurred. That is not true today. A power outage in one city can disrupt and hamper businesses throughout the United States. A winter storm in one locale (for example, Denver in 2006) can delay and disrupt travel on several major airlines and at numerous airports. Regionally produced or controlled commodities can grow scarce. Supply chains can be interrupted. Also, the emergency management community benefits from the scale offered by coordinating regional and national efforts. Diverse organizations can share information; track resources and supplies in real time; establish mobile command centers; collaborate on preparation, training, relief, and recovery operations; and avoid working at cross-purposes.

But putting that megacommunity approach into practice is still difficult. After the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11), for example, the U.S. federal government placed an explicit emphasis on interoperability, information sharing, and cross-agency collaboration. Billions of dollars went into planning activities, training, exercises, and communications systems. But four years later, officials at FEMA were unprepared for an event of the scale and complexity of Hurricane Katrina. They had not taken sufficient steps to prevent or minimize the hurricane's damage; they were not prepared to evacuate citizens; they could not marshal the enormous reservoir of public- and private-sector resources required for timely relief; and today, they are not demonstrating the national capacity to help the region recover.

One reason is the prevalence of command-and-control management in the U.S. federal government,

paradoxically embedded in agencies with shifting, overlapping, and sometimes ambiguous responsibilities. When FEMA, for example, was created in the late 1970s, its mission focused largely on civil defense and the Soviet nuclear threat. After the Cold War ended, the agency emphasized disaster relief, recovery, and mitigation programs. Following 9/11, FEMA was absorbed into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), an agency charged with identifying and responding to terrorist threats. Finally, after the tumultuous 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, FEMA's core mission became "all hazards." But it was never quite clear how the agency's responsibilities would mesh with those of other agencies: the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for infectious diseases and biological threats, the U.S. Forest Service for fires and floods, and the U.S. military for civil defense. In that kind of ambiguous structure, the higher the degree of control exercised by any one agency or organization, the greater the potential for inter-organizational conflict.

The megacommunity approach requires that major actors explicitly reexamine the traditional boundaries defining their roles and responsibilities, and that government agencies look beyond themselves to the private sector and civil groups for important resources, leadership, and activities. For public officials, this means opening up the planning process, making others full partners in decision making, and curbing the desire to unilaterally prescribe solutions. An effective megacommunity achieves its goals through collaboration among full partners. In Florida, Governor Jeb Bush had to surrender some of the state's direct control over disaster preparation, but the state was ultimately rewarded with shared benefits.

Despite its challenge to conventional thinking, the megacommunity approach is gaining ground among emergency management practitioners. Here are a few examples:

• **U.S. Northern Command (NorthCom).** A joint Army–Navy–Air Force military organization established in 2002 to support civil authorities during emergencies, NorthCom aims to develop cooperative working relationships with governmental and nongovernmental preparedness organizations. NorthCom does not share a chain of command with civilian federal, state, and local agencies, and it cannot give orders to private-sector and nongovernmental organizations that participate in disaster relief and recovery. Yet when it is asked to deliver food, supplies, and other services in response to a disaster, it must work closely with these organizations. Consequently, NorthCom officials have declared that they are modifying the military's traditional command-and-control leadership model — known as C2 — and adopting "collaboration and communication" instead.

• **Health and Human Services.** HHS oversees the National Bioterrorism Hospital Preparedness Program and awards about $500 million annually in grant aid to help hospitals and health-care systems prepare for and respond to bioterrorism and other public health emergencies. Recognizing that hospitals depend on a variety of organizations during a crisis, HHS has developed award criteria that emphasize collaboration. For example, during a bioterrorist attack, a hospital would have to coordinate with the police, fire departments, and other hospitals. In addition, hospital officials would work with the media to disseminate public information. During an extended crisis, the hospital might rely on members of the private sector, such as Wal-Mart or Home Depot, for extra supplies such as water and protective masks. In awarding grants, HHS rewards hospitals that not only list such partners in their plans but also demonstrate that they are collaborating and training with them to ensure smooth operations when an emergency occurs.

• **Multistate Coalitions.** Medical centers and hospitals in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine have formed the Northern New England Metropolitan Medical Response System as a way to maximize available resources, especially in rural areas, when disaster strikes. Similarly, Iowa is leading a preparedness coalition with nine other states called the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture. Participating are state agriculture secretaries, homeland security advisors, emergency management directors, and state veterinarians. These and other examples suggest a new governance model in which states collectively address regional issues that transcend state borders.

• **Private-Sector Partnerships.** Numerous corporations are forming partnerships with relief organizations and becoming involved in pre-disaster planning and preparation. For example, following the 2004 tsunami in South Asia, Coca-Cola quickly carried out a plan it had already coordinated for using the soft-drink production lines of local subsidiaries to bottle drinking water for the relief effort. Companies such as British Airways, UPS, FedEx, and DHL worked with established aid agency partners to provide free or subsidized transportation of relief supplies. Some companies pursue these relationships on their own, but others are creating multicompany partnerships or consortia that can help marshal enormous medical and emergency resources during a crisis.

Guideposts for Collaboration

A megacommunity is more than a public–private partnership or alliance. It is a carefully designed effort in which all the key actors are invited to collaborate with the understanding that they are comanaging the problem and the development of solutions. Here are a few guideposts that can help initiating groups — whether they are government agencies, private-sector corporations, or NGOs — begin a responsiveness-oriented megacommunity:

1. Identify and Empower Stakeholders. The unpredictability of disaster events requires not just a full panorama of allies, but creative and engaging ways for them to participate from the beginning. NorthCom, for example, maintains an "NGO desk" to mobilize support

from the civil sector. The desk is run by employees of the Humanitarian International Services Group, a nonprofit that specializes in identifying, mobilizing, and managing private-sector resources in response to a disaster.

2. Be an Initiator. Florida state officials played an essential role by convening the state's disaster preparedness megacommunity. This involved engaging publicly elected officials at the state and local levels, emergency management officials and professionals, first responders, public health professionals, private-sector and civil organization experts, academic leaders, and others. The key was engaging these players as full partners.

3. Embrace Interdependence. During a crisis, effective medical assistance cannot be provided if hospitals lack electric power; if various police jurisdictions don't work together to provide safe, open roads for travel; or if vehicles are not available to deliver water and medical supplies and to remove medical waste. Plan, train, and rehearse the methods by which these separate but interrelated organizations will function together if a crisis occurs.

4. Allow for Ambiguity. Accept that your organization will have overlapping responsibilities with other organizations. For example, in the U.S. federal government, HHS, the Department of State, DHS, and NorthCom have all been assigned crucial but sometimes overlapping roles in the fight against pandemic influenza. Rather than ignoring this reality or resisting perceived encroachments on their turf, these organizations — if they want to succeed — will have to communicate, negotiate, and decide together in advance of a disaster how they will manage their common responsibilities.

5. Reward Collaboration. Everyone knows collaboration is a must, but organizations and people often need a push in the right direction. Instead of protecting their turf by punishing cooperative behavior, agency leaders should create incentives that encourage it. And, of course, example is the best teacher: How much planning and training are you doing with stakeholders in your preparedness community?

6. Strengthen Your Social Networks. Many officials have learned through sad experience that an emergency is not the time to start exchanging business cards. The more contacts that preparedness leaders have already developed in the community, the more effective their networks will be in facilitating preparedness. An important part of megacommunity activities is establishing the trust and rapport ahead of time that will be needed during a crisis.

For many leaders, this new perspective is liberating; it frees them from the notion that they must control outcomes and events unilaterally when, in fact, complexity makes that virtually impossible. This approach also provides greater adaptability, allowing the entire community to call on an ever-expanding circle of resources, capabilities, and talents during catastrophic events. Finally, the megacommunity concept embraces and empowers all actors as full partners with unique strengths to offer, thus capitalizing on the very best ideas, ingenuity, and innovation from across the public, private, and civil sectors — to meet the urgent needs of a global citizenry that arguably faces more frequent and complex disasters than ever before, with less of a clear sense of which cavalry to call. ✚

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