

BUILDING AN EMERGENCY MEDICINE SYSTEM FROM SCRATCH

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Abstract

Three years ago the inspectorate for fire services and the health inspectorate worked together in showing a devastatingly poor picture of the system for emergency medicine and disaster management in the Netherlands. Now a system is being put in place that is supported by local, regional and central government as well as by the (para)medical professionals.

The story begins with the report: De keten rammelt. (The chain of events, which forms a system of emergency medicine, is rattling) This was the position of the emergency medical services at the time which was incongruent, non cooperative to others and not professional. The other important partners, local and regional government, did not show any interest at all for the subject. The main objectives of the project GHOR (emergency medicine both day to day as with large scale disasters) were established as follows. The government had to be aware of its role and had to act accordingly. The chain of events had to be described and understood. And the individual services had to be triggered to perform better. First we had to create a common ground for all involved so we organised group sessions and discussions that led to the vision document. This was a milestone because it combined the efforts of the organisationally interested and the ones interested in the medical content of the system. The patient was to be the central focal point for all efforts. The system had to reduce the number of casualties and invalids for a given incident and is cost effective as well. The only way to achieve this was to see what the different players in the field could do to support this goal.

The entire chain was identified, the order in which emergency medicine is performed comes down to ten steps. Now the linking feature had to be determined. This is still a major discussion point. We still lack substantial quantitative evidence for supporting the idea that it is going better. The system for registration throughout the chain is still under construction but the drive to put something in place for all concerned is growing. The attention by the governmental agencies is one of the main successes of the project.

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Abstract

The Florida Cooperative Extension Service has developed a disaster information program called the Comprehensive Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Education Module. Module information is wide-ranging, available in several media, and suitable for many different audiences. The authors introduce the Extension Service, describe the work done to date on the Module (including three recently released videobooks), and outline an information model for disaster intended to guide future efforts.

Introduction

Hurricane Andrew was the first in a series of wake-up calls in the 1990s which continued with the World Trade Center Bombing (Feb. 26, 1993), the Oklahoma City Bombing (April 19, 1995), and the Midwest Floods of 1997 to name but a few (Alexander 1997). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) lists 44 weather-related disasters that have caused more than 1 billion US dollars in damage in the period 1980-2000 (NOAA 2000). Thirty-six of these disasters were in the 90s. Losses associated with these disasters were in excess of 130 billion US dollars and over 2000 deaths. While dollar damages in the 1980s were less, deaths were on the order of 12,000 to 20,000 due to two extended drought/flood waves.

These events and the extensive news coverage devoted to them focused the attention of the public and professionals alike on the vulnerability of U.S. infrastructure to both natural and man-made catastrophes. Each one prompted additional planning and