

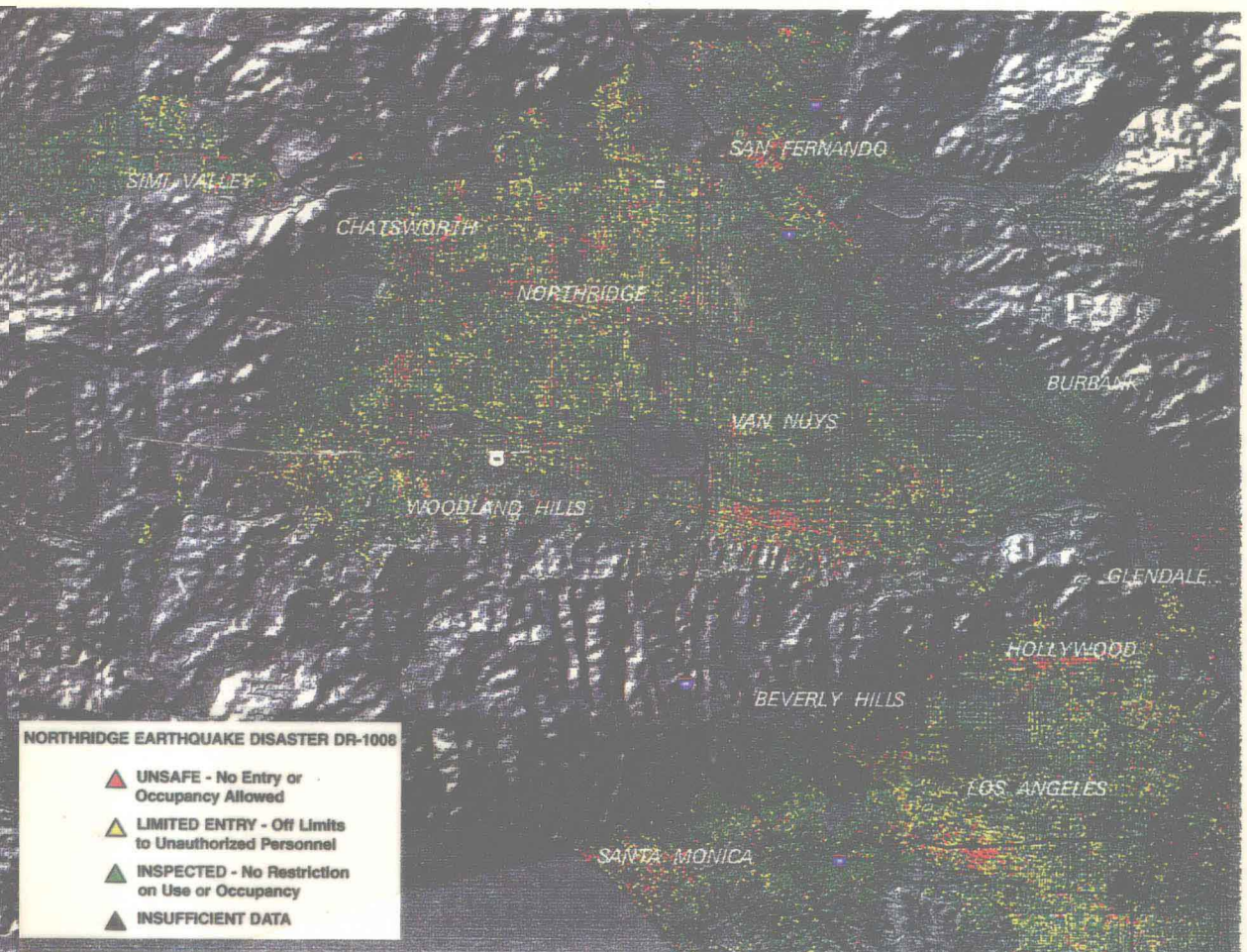
**SECOND EDITION**

# **DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN THE U.S. AND CANADA**

**The Politics, Policymaking, Administration  
and Analysis of Emergency Management**

**RICHARD T. SYLVES**

**WILLIAM L. WAUGH, JR.**



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*Edited by*

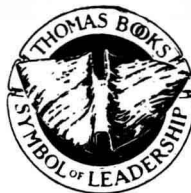
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IN THE U.S. AND CANADA**

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**Richard T. Sylves;** professor of political science and public administration at the University of Delaware. He wrote *The Nuclear Oracles: A Political History of the General Advisory Committee of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, 1947-77*, published in 1987 and co-edited *Cities and Disaster: North American Studies in Emergency Management* (with W. Waugh) in 1990. In 1993 he testified before the U.S. Senate Governmental Affairs Committee about reforms needed at the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency. He has published about 30 articles in academic journals and books, most on disaster management. He is editor and publisher of the newsletter, "Emergency Management Dispatch," for the American Society for Public Administration's Section on Emergency and Crisis Management. Over 1994-95, he was a Center for Advanced Study faculty fellow at his home university and is helping FEMA develop model emergency management courses.

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*To my parents  
Robert and Joanne Sylves*

*To my wife  
Deb Waugh*

## FOREWORD

**E**mergencies constantly test our ability to deal with crisis. The loss of life, services, and businesses have a dramatic impact on people. Fear that disasters may or will strike in the future contributes to stress. For some there is fear of personal suffering and individual property loss. For others, there is fear of business disruption that hurts owners, managers, and employees in general. For others still, there is fear that disaster will irreparably damage public infrastructure, metropolitan economies, or local property and income tax bases.

Emergency managers understand and appreciate these fears. They have advocated disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery to policymakers and the public with modest success. However, the differing philosophies, priorities, and perceptions of others have created conflict and competition, making it ever more difficult for them to collect, maintain, and organize the people and resources needed to perform emergency management. Today, emergency managers must be masters of anticipatory thinking, exhibit leadership, and exercise artful powers of persuasion in order to overcome incessant turf wars among public agencies and officials. They must use their talents to save emergency management from indifference, complacency, and the daily crush of other public business.

This book builds from an earlier edition, from advances in the literature and field of emergency management, and from recent disaster experience, to offer concepts and lessons to local, state, and provincial governments and organizations that must cope with disasters. A central theme is the need for all levels of government to develop a cooperative effort to plan for, and handle, emergencies. Authors want various organizations, inside and outside government, to work in close harmony and with coordination, because they know no single agency or entity can independently manage disasters or major emergencies.

Emergency management has become a vital profession better able to meet ever-increasing public demands, better able to advance post-disaster

cost recovery and relief, and better able to put communities back together after a disaster. This book is designed and intended to help the reader, whether familiar or unfamiliar with the field, better understand the human impacts emergencies have on us all. It examines laws, policies, regulations, and arrangements of the intergovernmental world of disaster management.

The original 1990 edition of this book had its origins in a 1984 Federal Emergency Management Agency sponsored workshop to promote scholarly understanding of emergency management. There I had the personal and professional benefit of working with Rick Sylves and Bill Waugh, who later included one of my articles in their first edition and now have invited me to write this Foreword. I am a mayor and professor who has had direct experience in my home city dealing with several federally declared disasters. I have long been a student and teacher of emergency management as well. I therefore say with confidence, contributors to this volume draw from policymakers, emergency managers, and academic researchers in a way that advances our knowledge and understanding of disaster management. The book represents a strong contribution to the professional field of emergency management, and its editors and contributors are to be commended.

ALLEN K. SETTLE

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## INTRODUCTION

**H**urricane Andrew, the Northridge Earthquake, the 1993 Great Midwestern Flood, the New York Twin Towers bombing, and the Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Office Building bombing, have catapulted disaster management into the public policy arena. For North America, the 1990s may not be labeled the decade of disaster, but clearly natural and man-made disasters have become more destructively expensive, in some respects more deadly, and certainly better publicized.

In the mid-to-late 1980s, we went to work on a jointly edited book. Published in 1990, *Cities and Disaster: North American Studies in Emergency Management*, was aimed at bringing U.S. and Canadian scholarly research on emergency management to a growing community of interest. We commissioned experts who were academics, practitioners, or both, to contribute their work to that endeavor. We wanted *Cities* to serve as a reader in undergraduate and graduate courses that addressed emergency management and disaster policy. We wanted to build greater awareness of, and scholarship within, emergency management inside and outside academic circles. We sought to refute these common myths: that emergency management is all-training and no education; that the field of emergency management has few occupants willing to promote knowledge creation and professionalism; that studies of disaster are only unidisciplinary and anecdotal; and, that emergency management is peripheral, narrowly occupational, episodic work. If we achieved our objectives, we were helped by an unfortunate string of mega-disasters and by a fortunate revolution in the political and managerial world of disaster management.

*Disaster Management in the U.S. and Canada* is a complete overhaul of the 1990 first edition. Most chapters are new and the three which are not, were rewritten and revised. More chapters are added, more disciplinary perspectives are represented, more American and Canadian authors and articles are featured, and more emphasis is given to national, state

and provincial roles in disaster management but without ignoring the continuing centrality of local emergency management.

The heart of this compilation is the intergovernmental relations of disaster management. *Cities and Disaster* concentrated on municipal and local aspects of emergency management. *Disaster Management in the U.S. and Canada* extends beyond this in a variety of directions. Readers will notice that disaster management now has a place in the offices of the President and the Canadian Prime Minister, now is regularly examined and debated in the U.S. Congress and Canadian Parliament, now has a higher public profile thanks to the work of the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency and Emergency Preparedness Canada, and now has greater importance and respect in state and provincial governments.

Readers will also recognize that this book gets closer to disaster victims. Several chapters address the post-disaster problems of homeowners, apartment dwellers, and business people. Many chapters provide a sense of what governors, mayors, and other public officials need to understand about disaster management, appreciating that disaster management is generally not their domain of expertise. Emergency responders, planners, information managers, and citizen advisers also hold prominent positions in this study.

We hope this book is used as a text and/or reader in emergency management-related courses, whether in public administration, political science, intergovernmental relations, disaster sociology, organizational studies, or urban studies. We also hope everyone in the vast community of emergency management, whether working at the local, state, provincial, or federal level, working in the corporate sector, or serving in non-profit community organizations, reads and benefits from this book.

The world of North American disaster management has grown more complex and more interdependent. The North American Free Trade Agreement has helped pull Canada, Mexico, and the United States closer together. A commodity of more open trade may be information about disaster management. Perhaps this book is a modest contribution to that exchange.

## **PART 1**

Part 1 sets the stage by reviewing how emergency management has evolved in the 1990s. Problems, ineptitude, and disorganization in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew created tremendous pressure for reform



of U.S. emergency management. Disasters have become more political than ever before. President Clinton, despite shortcomings in other policy areas, has made improved emergency management an administration goal. He and his FEMA Director, James Lee Witt, have dramatically refashioned federal emergency management.

In Chapter I, Richard T. Sylves surveys these changes through two rounds of National Performance Review. His chapter considers the FEMA Director's organizational relations, managerial pressures, constituency and clientele service obligations, and critical internal agency forces. He shows how FEMA's reform of federal emergency management has affected the states.

In Chapter II, Sylves delves into the controversy surrounding the politics of presidential disaster declarations and he examines the budget battles over who is to pay for the increasing costs of disasters and emergencies. Each controversy embodies conflict between the federal government and the states. Sylves enters the nether world of gubernatorial requests for presidential disaster declarations by considering the record of approvals and turndowns by nine presidents. He surmises that media coverage and political factors have much to do with who wins and who loses.

In Chapter III, William L. Waugh, Jr. and Sylves address a range of intergovernmental emergency management issues. Chapters I and II were written from the national perspective. Chapter III was written from a state and local perspective. The chapter surveys and comments on the strengths and weaknesses of state and local emergency management. All-hazards and integrated emergency management, federal cost-sharing arrangements, movement to block grants, national performance standards, the FEMA press for state disaster trust funds, obstacles to local emergency management, the role of counties in disaster management, disaster victims as "customers," etc., are investigated in policy analytic terms and in terms which appreciate the position of the states and localities.

In Chapter IV, Henry C. Hightower and Michel Coutu investigate Canadian federal law and policy regarding emergency management. They present British Columbia and Quebec provincial emergency preparedness and response arrangements, and they offer an insightful case study of how one Vancouver metro area city has gone about preparing for a catastrophic earthquake. Their work interweaves findings of disaster sociological research with a vivid description of earthquake hazard

vulnerabilities of the case city, its response organizations, and the work of planners in meeting the locality's disaster threat.

## **PART 2**

Part 2 is devoted exclusively to the state of California. No other state has received more presidential declarations of major disaster; no other state has received more federal disaster relief dollars; no other state has experienced more disaster damage loss; and no other state has the variety of disasters and emergencies California does (determined from Sylves' analysis of 42 years of presidential disaster declaration data supplied by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency). Florida's Hurricane Andrew was more devastating and deadly than California's Northridge Earthquake. However, long-term, multi-billion dollar Northridge quake recovery costs far exceed Hurricane Andrew's and a considerably larger share of Andrew's losses were privately insured when compared with Northridge Earthquake losses—meaning Northridge absorbed substantially more public money than did Andrew.

Owing to frequent experience with disaster, California is in many ways on the cutting edge of emergency management. These chapters confirm this claim in many dimensions of management, but they also highlight glaring deficiencies and continuing vulnerabilities.

In Chapter V, Frances E. Winslow presents California's "operational area" approach to urban-suburban-rural emergency preparedness and response. She demonstrates how America's most populous state is attempting to orchestrate a multiplicity of governments reflecting a dizzying array of emergency capabilities and resources. The California Office of Emergency Services' operational area initiative was not joyously embraced in every local jurisdiction. She reviews major implementation problems and considers prospects for success and possible adoption of the "operational area" concept elsewhere.

In Chapter VI, Robert W. Klebs and Sylves grapple with the grass-roots problem of Northridge Earthquake housing repair and family assistance. Klebs walks us through the damaged or demolished homes of Northridge quake survivors. His account is written from the perspective of a FEMA investigator. Klebs' experience conveys a wealth of knowledge regarding FEMA post-disaster inspection work and is a poignant plea for more and better earthquake mitigation in residential single-family, multi-family, and condominium construction. Klebs and Sylves

present the plight of quake victims, many of them displaced from their homes and bewildered by the problems of rebuilding, renovating, or relocating. The chapter also demonstrates the challenge of FEMA's job in verifying loss, validating that assistance funds were spent properly, responding to complaints of disaster assistance applicants, and representing government in a human form to disaster victims. It also demonstrates how high technology advances like grid pads, palmtops, cellular phones, voice mail, paperless inspections, and geographic information systems, are transforming disaster field work.

Building from first person interviews of responders, official documents, and newspaper accounts, Sandra Sutphen's Chapter VII takes us into the field with southern California firefighters to battle a stubborn series of wildfires that constantly encroach into and threaten developed areas. Her account reveals both triumphs and failures of intergovernmental coordination. No chapter better demonstrates the multi-dimensionality of disaster mitigation and preparedness. Homeowners complain that Endangered Species Act rules prevented them from removing flammable vegetation from around their properties and so they blamed the federal government for wildfire damage to their homes. Environmental interests succeed in defeating a fire department request for a new hilltop reservoir and months later residents scream at firefighters who are winding up hose as wildfire flames bear down on their neighborhood. The firefighters had insufficient water and pressure to combat the fire in several areas, in part because the reservoir was never built.

### **PART 3**

Part 3 aims more at the heartland of the U.S. Here the concerns are flood policy, the impact of key utility loss on businesses during and after the 1993 Midwest floods, and Local Emergency Planning Committees of the central U.S.

In Chapter VIII, Beverly A. Cigler revisits U.S. flood policy in a thorough and up-to-date consideration of lessons learned, and not learned, from the 1993 Midwest flood. She explains major changes in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the growing importance of environmental disaster mitigation, the changing role of the Army Corps of Engineers, the success of FEMA-sponsored home (and town) relocation efforts, and a host of other matters. Cigler laments the continuing low