

Unit 3 Assignment  
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In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it is plain to see that there was inadequate planning, preparation and mitigation by the federal government to handle such extreme circumstances as the “storm of the century”. The men and women on Capitol Hill who were placed in charge of assessing the ultimate dangers that a hurricane could, and ultimately did, bring upon the states involved were woefully and inadequately prepared to successfully deal with such a storm and resultant disaster. Not only was the agency, who had been tasked with responding to emergency situations ill-equipped and undermanaged, but it was found that those in charge were inadequately trained to respond to anything as devastating as Hurricane Katrina (A failure of initiative, 2006).

It was because of the ineptitude of bureaucracy and the inexperience of those who were put in charge of handling the preparations, that the response to Hurricane Katrina was as slipshod an effort as it was. The citizens who were domiciled in her path were given inadequate time and resources to do what they needed to do; the order to evacuate the area was not given with sufficient time to be helpful in providing an orderly and total evacuation. It also did not take into consideration nor provide means for those people who could not afford to leave the area or those who did not have the resources to vacate the area of the projected path of Hurricane Katrina. In essence, the people who were impacted most directly by the disaster, were basically left to fend for themselves; the government failed (A failure of initiative, 2006).

In order to rectify this situation, we need to implement greater pre-disaster planning, not only in the DHS and FEMA, but also in the local and state government sectors as well. There needs to be a closed circuit of information flowing to and from all agencies and said communication needs to be forthcoming in a timely manner that allows

sufficient time for prepared emergency measures to be taken. Having regular training exercises and coordinating the efforts of support and auxiliary agencies such as the National Guard, the Department of Defense, and Coast Guard would enhance awareness, preparedness and adaptability to the situation presented by an emergency, by all parties involved and create a coordinated "attack" plan rather than a collection of singular efforts by separate parties (A failure of initiative, 2006).

During Katrina, many of the plans that had been initially made to prepare for this type of emergency were seen to be incommensurate with what was needed. Much of this was due to the public's ideas that the federal government was the end all when it came to the actual planning phase. However, the planning stage should be placed more into the local government's and community's hands; they are the ones who are in the battle zone and have the ability to find out what it is that is needed most by their constituents. The Federal agencies should be supporting the local government's efforts by providing them with what they need and when they need it and only in an oversight capacity rather than as an equal authority as to the dispensation of monies, supplies and resources (A failure of initiative, 2006).

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it seemed even more disarray and confusion reigned among the first responders. Medical supplies, food and water rations, and equipment were all found to be lacking. Also important were the questions raised by local organizations about the usage and misuse of funds allocated toward the relief effort. This point was also raised by many news agencies who had been on the scene in the aftermath of Katrina.

Just as with planning, the initial response teams should also remain locally based with subsequent and backup teams being brought from abroad on an as-needed basis. Any funds that are doled out by the federal government would need to be placed into a special escrow account that is set aside only for emergencies and a single financial manager put into place to divvy the funds according to need. This would alleviate the confusion of too many hands going into one pot and simplify the approval process.

While everyone seemed to have been unprepared for the inundation of devastation that had been brought on by Hurricane Katrina, there was certainly no shortage of response when it came to the recovery effort. People from around the country reacted to the plight of the people who were displaced and flooded the area with food, clothing, building materials and other supplies needed by the survivors. There were funds set up to help bring in money to aid in the relief efforts and across the country, towns, churches and other organizations sent people into the stricken areas to help with the rebuilding process (Suarez, 2005). Unfortunately many times, these funds ended up being misappropriated and then used for things other than what they were originally allocated for or simply used to line the pockets of some unscrupulous people. Cases of misappropriation, theft, and fraud range from small acts such as misuse of government issued debit cards, FEMA issued thousands of debit cards worth \$2,000 each in the weeks following Katrina (FBI, 2009), to larger cases such as that of the former Lumberton, Mississippi chief of police who was tried and convicted on eight fraud charges in federal court in connection with lying to receive financial reparations for a property that it turned out, was not his primary residence (FBI, 2009). "To date, more

than 1,300 people have been indicted for Katrina-related crimes, including stealing government funds (FBI, 2009).

Had proper steps been taken before Katrina hit to inform the public in a timely manner, had evacuation plans been in place to lessen the mad rush of people leaving the area and more help been given to those less able to act, the impact of the storm might have been reduced. Funds that had been set aside to help victims should have been managed correctly and supplies made more readily available for those who needed them. Response needs to be well coordinated and there needs to be effective communication in place between the various agencies and their field teams (A failure of initiative, 2006).

## References

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